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THE SON OF A KING

BY F. A. STEEL

ILLUSTRATED BY A. FORESTIER



"BARRING my pay," he said ruefully, "I haven't a coin in the world." And for the moment, newly accepted lover as he was, his eyes actually left hers and wandered away to the reddening yellow of the sunset with a certain resentment at the limitations of his world.

"Father has plenty!" she put in joyously. And for the moment her hand actually touched his in a new-born sense of appropriation and right of reassurance which made her blush faintly. It also made his eyes return to hers, whereat she blushed furiously, and then tried to cover her confusion by a jest. "Well! he has. Hasn't he the best collection of coins in India?"

"He wouldn't part with one of them, though, for love or money. And I doubt his parting with you—though I could pay a lot—in love."



He had both her hands now, and the very newness of the position made her fence with the emotion it aroused.

"He parted with duplicates—"

"But you aren't one—there isn't anyone like you in the wide, wide world. And I'm glad you're not. I don't want anyone else to be as lucky as I am—"

She retreated still further from realities into jesting. "Then he exchanges quite often, so, if you only set yourself to find something—" She broke off, and her face lit up. "Oh, Jim! I have such a delightful idea! You shall find the gold coin—you know the one I mean—with the date that is to settle, or unsettle, half the history of the world! Do you know, I really believe, if you helped him to confound all those German wisecracks, that father would be quite willing to exchange—"

"His daughter for the ducat! Perhaps. But, unfortunately—and quite between ourselves—I have my doubts about the existence of that coin. Or if it does exist it's hopelessly hidden away for ever and ever and aye, like that blessed old buried city of his that we have all been hunting after this month past in the wilderness. I don't wish to be disrespectful to your father, Queenie, but I believe he dreamt of it—that is to say, if it didn't dream of him—one never knows which comes first—"

He paused, arrested in the egoism, the absolute individualism of love by the mystery of the collective life which was part even of that love, and once more his eyes wandered to the sun-setting.

The sky had darkened on the horizon as the dust haze shadowed into purple, so that the distant edge of the low sand-hills, losing definite outline, seemed almost level. Yet far and near, from the feet of the lovers as they sat close together to that uncertain ending of their visible world, not a straight line was to be seen. Everything showed in curves—curves that told their unflinching tale of unseen circlings. The wrinkled ripples left by the last wind upon the sea of sand around them waved over the endless undulations of the desert, the sparse tussocks of coarse grass fell in fountains from their own centres, the stunted thorn-bushes were coiled and twisted on themselves like tangled skeins without a clue, the faint tracks of the

sand-rats and the partridges wound snake-like in every direction, and even the footprints which had brought the two lovers in their present resting-place held the same hint of reference to unseen continuity, for, absorbed in Love's new world they had wandered on aimlessly, unheeding of the old one at their feet.

The result stared them in the face now in a firm yet undecided trail that was by far the most salient feature in the indefinite landscape. Jim Forrester laughed as he directed her attention to it.

"We seem to have gone round and round on our tracks; so the tents, and your respected father and civilisation generally must be—well! exactly where I would have sworn they were not. But that just bears out what I was saying. For all we know the whole thing may be a peculiarly vicious circle! The world may be going back when we think it is going forward, and all the fine new things we think we find, may only be ourselves again. You and I, and the buried city and the gold coin—everything that we dream of, or that dreams of us, may only be part of the hidden circle which belongs to the curve of a life which has no straight lines—My God! take care—what the devil is that?"

That, if anything, was a straight line—straight as an arrow. And an arrow it was, still vibrating in the soft sand at their very feet. Jim Forrester stood up angrily and looked round for the archer who had drawn his bow at such an unpleasantly close venture. But no one was visible, so he stooped down and drew the arrow out of the sand. He had seen its like, or almost its like, before in those wild central tracts of sandy desert where the wandering tribes of goat-herds still cling to the weapons of a past age. His companion, however, had not, and she bent to examine it curiously. The attitude made the fair coils of her hair which were plaited round her head look more than ever like a heavy gold crown.

"It takes one back to another world altogether," she said, watching him as he balanced it critically to appraise the perfection of its poise, "To a world where it was made perhaps—for it looks old, doesn't it! I wonder who—"

She paused, becoming conscious that someone was standing behind her. Jim Forrester became conscious of the fact also, and showed it in such an aggressive way that she exclaimed hastily—

"Don't be angry with him, please. It must have been quite a chance—he couldn't have known we were here."

Even without the plea it would have been difficult for the young Englishman to refuse the chance of explanation to the figure which had appeared so unexpectedly. For, though in all outward accessories it was only that of a wandering goatherd, there was a calm dignity about it which claimed consideration. The



A youthful buoyancy such as the Greek sculptors gave to the young Apollo.

fillet which bound the hair, sun-ripened to a rich brown on its waves and curls, was only a knotted bit of goat's hair string, but the head it encircled had a youthful buoyancy such as the Greek sculptors gave to the young Apollo, a resemblance enhanced by the statuesque folds of the rough goat's-hair blanketing which was sparsely draped over the bare, sinewy yet fine-drawn frame.

The face, however, was faintly aquiline, and the eyes, deep set between prominent brow and cheek bone, had the mingled fire and softness which in India so often redeems an otherwise commonplace countenance.

"I was stalking bustard, Huzoor," said the goatherd frankly, with a flash of very white teeth, "and being face down on the sand yonder behind the grasses saw nothing till the Presences stood up, but a glint of the sun on something."

He spoke to the man, but his eyes were on the girl's golden crown of hair.

Jim Forrester suddenly broke the arrow across his knee and threw the fragments from him into the sand ripples.

"Hand me over the bow too," he said peremptorily, then paused. "Hullo! Where the deuce did you get that—it is very old—the oldest I've seen—with a looped string too?" he added, handling it curiously.

The goatherd smiled. "The Presence is welcome to keep it if he likes. I can get plenty more in the old city."

Once again in speaking to the man, his eyes, askance, were on the girl.

She started. "In the old city," she echoed, "Jim! do you hear

goatherd rose into the darkening dust haze. He was calling to his flock, and the words of his old-time chant were clearly audible—

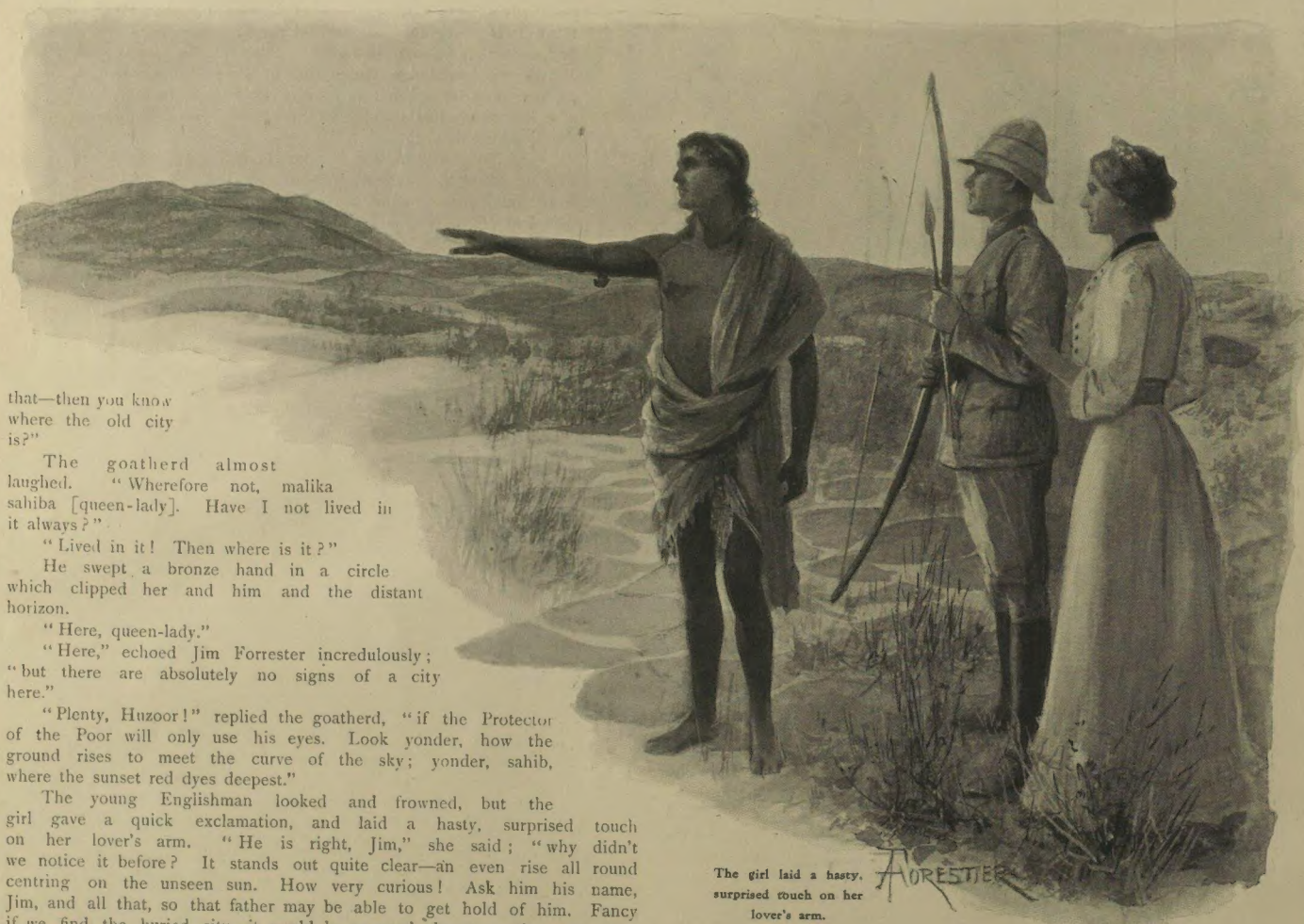
"O, seekers for Life's meat,
Your course is run!
Come home with weary feet,
Rest is so sweet.
What though one day be done?—
Another has begun.
The flock, the fold are one,
Where long years meet!"

"I hope he told us his real name!" she said suddenly.

CHAPTER II.

"My dear child, all your geese are swans—and so were your poor mother's before you," said her father. And then his eyes grew dreamy, perhaps over the intricacies of some new coins he was classifying; though, in truth, the memory of the young wife who had left him alone with a week-old baby in the days of his youth had somehow come harder to him during the last few happier, more home-like years since his daughter had returned to take her mother's place as mistress of the house; for the girl was very like the dead woman.

She had brought her father his afternoon cup of tea to the office-tert, cleared for that brief recess of the cloud of clerks and witnesses, who through the wide canvas-wings, set open to let in the air, could be seen



The girl laid a hasty, surprised touch on her lover's arm.

that—then you know where the old city is?"

The goatherd almost laughed. "Wherefore not, malika sahiba [queen-lady]. Have I not lived in it always?"

"Lived in it! Then where is it?"

He swept a bronze hand in a circle which clipped her and him and the distant horizon.

"Here, queen-lady."

"Here," echoed Jim Forrester incredulously; "but there are absolutely no signs of a city here."

"Plenty, Huzoor!" replied the goatherd, "if the Protector of the Poor will only use his eyes. Look yonder, how the ground rises to meet the curve of the sky; yonder, sahib, where the sunset red dyes deepest."

The young Englishman looked and frowned, but the girl gave a quick exclamation, and laid a hasty, surprised touch on her lover's arm. "He is right, Jim," she said; "why didn't we notice it before? It stands out quite clear—an even rise all round centring on the unseen sun. How very curious! Ask him his name, Jim, and all that, so that father may be able to get hold of him. Fancy if we find the buried city—it would be as good almost as the gold coin, though somehow it makes me feel creepy." She gave a faint shiver as she spoke.

"The queen-lady should not remain in the wilderness when the sun has set," came in swift warning from the goatherd; "there is a fever fiend lurks in it and brings strange dreams."

Something almost of familiarity and command in the liquid yet vibrant voice made Jim Forrester frown again and say shortly, "Yes; we must get back: it grows quite cold."

The girl looked half bewildered first to one and then to the other of the two tall figures that stood between her and the fast-fading light, against which she still saw clearly that faint swelling domed blue shadow, as of some other world forcing its way through the crust of the visible one.

So she stood silent, vaguely disturbed while the few questions necessary to identify the man who answered them were asked.

She did not speak, indeed, until, with faces set on the right path for their camp and civilisation generally, they paused on the top of the first sand-rippled wave to look back. The shadowy dome was still there, swelling towards the vanished sun, and from its side the figure of the young

huddled in groups among the sparse shadows of the stunted kikar trees amid which the camp was pitched. They could be heard also, since in the limited leisure at their disposal they were hubble-hubbling away at their hookahs conscientiously; the noise in its rhythmic, intermittent insistency seemed like a distant snore from the sleepy desert of sand that stretched away to the horizon on all sides.

"Of course," he went on, "you could hardly be expected to know—though really, my dear, you have all your mother's quickness of perception regarding people and places—but the mere fact of that goatherd fellow giving his name as Khesroo, and admitting he was low-caste, should have made you doubt his assertion. I confess I had little hope, for such knowledge as he professed to have is generally in the keeping of the priest-hool only."

"But Jim was there—I mean Mr. Forrester," she began. Her father coughed uneasily.

"Because I call my personal assistant, whom I have known as a child, Jim, that is no reason, my dear Queenie, why you should contract the habit. I don't think your poor mother would have liked it. Besides, though he is an able young man—very much so indeed, and when he grows

older will make an excellent officer—Mr. Forrester,—ahem!" (he made a violent effort over the name) "has no genius for antiquities. He utterly fails, for instance, to realise the far-reaching importance—for it would, of course, alter the whole chronology of the Græco-Bactrian era—of my contention concerning what Hausmann and the German school generally venture to designate a post-Vicramaditya. Yet some day, I feel sure, the gold coin of which Kapala gives so exact a description in B.C. 200, with the date under the legend and a double profile on the obverse, will turn up, and then the point will be settled, even if I do not live to see it."

He was fairly off on his hobby and had risen to pace the tent, his hands behind his back. Many a time and oft she had listened to him patiently, almost eagerly, for the story of India's golden age always fired her imagination, but to-day she was thinking of other things—of her engagement for one, which she must break to him sooner or later. So she went up to him and tucked her arm into his coaxingly.

"You may, father. It might be found any day. Do you know I believe you would give almost any thing—even your daughter—for that ducat. Wouldn't you?"

Absolute jest as it was, her voice trembled over the trivial words, as voices often do unconsciously when Fate means to turn them to her own purposes.

He smiled and patted her hand. "Undoubtedly I would, my dear. But, nice as you are, no one is likely to offer me that exchange. To begin with, the coin, as a simple unique, would be worth a fortune, and then there is the fame. Think of it! Half the philologists, most of the historians, and all those German fellows routed on their own ground!"

"Who knows?" she said, and then a frown dimmed the amusement in her eyes. "Though I can't understand," she added, "why that man Khesroo denied—as you say he did—having met Jim—I mean, us—yesterday. He can't be the wrong man, can he?"

"Mr. Forrester thinks he is not. But you can see for yourself," replied her father, returning to his tea and his treasures, "for he is still over in the orderlies' tent. They had such trouble hunting him out of the jungles and persuading him to come here that they said they must keep him overnight, anyhow, in case he was wanted."

An hour or so afterwards, therefore, a yellow legged constable escorted the goatherd who had answered to the name of Khesroo into the verandah of the Miss-Sahiba's drawing-room tent. It, also, was set wide to the cool of the desert evening, and its easy-chairs and low, flower-decked tables strewn with books and magazines struck a curiously dissonant note from that sounded by the wilderness of sandy waste, which on all sides hemmed in the little square of white-winged camp with a certain hungry emptiness.

"He is the man, Jim," said the girl in an undertone (for her father had come over from office and was seated within, reading the daily papers which the camel-post had just brought. "And yet—he looks different somehow—and so ill too."

He did look ill, with the languid yet harassed air which follows on malarial fever. The buoyancy of his carriage was replaced by an almost dejected air. Yet it was unmistakably the goatherd they had met the evening before, who, in obedience to a sign, squatted down midway, as it were, between the culture inside the tent and the savagery without it.

"You look as if you had been having fever—have you?" asked the

girl abruptly, for her years of authority had made her knowledgeable in such things.

"The malika sahiba says right," replied Khesroo indifferently; "I have had it much—this long while back."

"And you had it yesterday or the day before?"

"It was yesterday. I was put past by it all day. And yet—" here a vague perplexity came to the dulled yet anxious face as he looked first at the girl, then apologetically at Jim Forrester. "What the Presence said about meeting me is perhaps right after all. Yes! it is right. I did see the Huzoor. I have remembered from the graciousness of the queen-lady and the gold crown of her hair."

The young Englishman frowned angrily. "You work miracles in memory, my dear Queenie," he said, and there was quite an aggrieved tone in his voice as he turned shortly on the speaker. "Why on earth didn't you tell the truth before, then? And the old city? I suppose you remember all about that too?"

"The old city," echoed Khesroo doubtfully. "No, Huzoor! What should I know about it beyond what all know—that there was a city and that it is lost? Such as I know only what the wise tell them—" he paused, and even to his deprecation came a half-resigned self-assertion, "And yet I had more chance than most, seeing that my mother was twice-born."

"She was, was she?" put in his hearer, and then looked round towards his chief. "Do you hear that, Sir? His mother was a Brahmani—that may account for his profile, which you said this morning puzzled you in a low-caste man."

"I said it was Scythic in type, and so it is," was the answer, as the speaker laid down his paper and came forward for further inspection. "So your mother was twice-born," he continued, addressing the goatherd; "a child-widow, I suppose?"

Khesroo stretched his hand out, the fingers wide spread in a dignified assent which suited him better than his former almost cringing humility.

"Huzoor, yes! Her people, however, did not find her till I was nigh six; but after that, of course, I was alone."

A hush fell on the group, for—to those three listeners who understood them—the simple words told of a common enough tragedy in India; of a life denied all natural outlet, of unworthy love, of outraged pride of race followed by sure if slow revenge.

"And your father—who was he?"

Khesroo shook his head. "I had no one but my mother, Huzoor."

There was another hush, on which the girl's voice rose clear with a curious thrill in it.

"And she was very beautiful, was she not?"

"Her son is a good-looking fellow, at any rate," remarked Jim Forrester coolly, and, moving away, he took up the newspaper, conscious of a certain irritation, and began to read the latest report of wireless telegraphy with the unsuspecting and unquestioning assent which we of these latter days reserve for the marvels of matter only.

Her father having gone back to his papers also, the girl and the goatherd were left alone midway between civilisation and savagery. Huddled in his coarse blanketing, his bare arms crossed

The figure of the young goatherd rose into the darkening dust haze.



So she went up to him and tucked her arm into his coaxingly.

over his bare knees, there was nothing distinctive or unusual in Khesroo's figure, behind which the background of shadowy desert was fast fading into shadowy sky, except the haggardness of the aquiline face, the hollowness of the dark eyes. These struck her, and she stretched out her hand to feel his.

"Have you fever now? No, you are quite cool."

He shivered slightly at her touch, and his eyes, passing hers, seemed to rest on the plaits of her hair.

"No, Huzoor," he replied, "it is a thief fever—it is hard to catch."

She smiled. "I think quinine will manage it."

He shook his head. "Nothing catches that which robs us of life at its own time. It will leave me none some day." He spoke unconcernedly, as if the fact were beyond question.

"Then why do you wear that amulet if it is of no use?" she said, pointing to the little leathern bag, such as the wild tribes use for the carrying of charms, which was tied round his arm.

Khesroo shook his head again, but smiled this time, and the flash of his white teeth must have removed any doubt of his identity, had such doubt existed.

"The queen-lady mistakes," he said. "It does not contain a charm. It is my *pholongrar*."

"Your what?" she echoed, uncomprehending.

"*Pholongrar*. The picture, Huzoor, that the sun holds always of all things it has ever seen in the world. It showed this to a memsahiba long ago when I was little, and she showed it to my mother."

"You mean your photograph?"

"Huzoor, yes! Perhaps the queen-lady might care to see it, since it is like my mother as she was—before they found her!"

Perhaps it was the thought of what the poor woman must have been like after that finding which made the English girl feel a vague oppression as she took the tight roll of paper that Khesroo unfolded from a piece of red rag.

"I was five, Huzoor," he said simply, "and my mother loved me much."

Small wonder, was the girl's first thought as she looked at the sedate, yet childish face, half-concealed by the high turban, which had evidently been borrowed for the occasion, at the quaint dignity of the childish figure huddled into finery too large for it, and holding a flower in its hand as if it had been a sceptre. But as she looked a startled expression came over her face; she stood up and hurried to her father, with appeal in her voice.

"Oh, father! do look here! How very curious! This photograph of Khesroo when he was a child—I think mother must have taken it, for I am almost sure there is one like it in her diary—in the volume you gave me to read the other day, because we were camping through the same country. Stay! I'll fetch it—"

She was back in a moment with an unclasped book in her hand, and fluttered hastily through pages and sketches, almost to the end.

"There!" she cried suddenly, "I was sure of it!"

Her father laid the one photograph beside the other, and Jim Forrester, looking over his shoulder curiously, compared them also. They



She stretched out her hand to feel his.

were identical. But underneath the one pasted into the book a woman's hand had written—

"The Son of a King."

The title fitted the picture, and reminded the girl of something in Khesroo which had struck her yesterday and which was absent to-day. She turned over the page, but beyond it all was blank. Those words were the last in the diary.

"I think I remember something about it now, my dear," said her father, taking his hand away from the book gently; "it may have been the last she took, for I was camping round here as assistant just before—before you were born. And she was always taking children and giving pictures to the mothers; not that I remember that particular one—you see it must be fifteen years ago—at least."

"Nearer five-and-twenty, dear," she said softly, and as she realised the impotence of what the world counts as Time to touch the smallest thing that once has been, the utter irrelevance of days and weeks and years in connection with a single thought, the photographs before her grew dim to her eyes, the fine feminine writing with its verdict, "The Son of a King," became invisible.

So through her tears she saw only—blurred and indistinct—the wondering face of Khesroo the goatherd.

"Look!" she said in sudden impulse. "The sun must have held two pictures of you."

He stared at the duplicate stupidly. "I did not steal it," he began uneasily.

"Of course you didn't," she replied smiling now. "It was my mother who took the picture, and gave it to yours—she was the memsahiba you spoke of—perhaps you remember her?"

A look almost of relief came to the goatherd's haggard, anxious face. "Yes! Perhaps your slave remembers, and that is why he thought he recollected the graciousness of the queen-lady and the gold crown of her hair. That will be it, and your slave did not lie to the Huzoor." He looked apologetically towards the young Englishman; but the latter had once more an aggrieved tone in his voice as he said shortly in English—

"Whether he did or did not doesn't much matter. There isn't anything to be got out of him apparently, so perhaps you had better tell to the tent and see that he takes the quinine you send—as I suppose you will."

(Continued on page 9.)

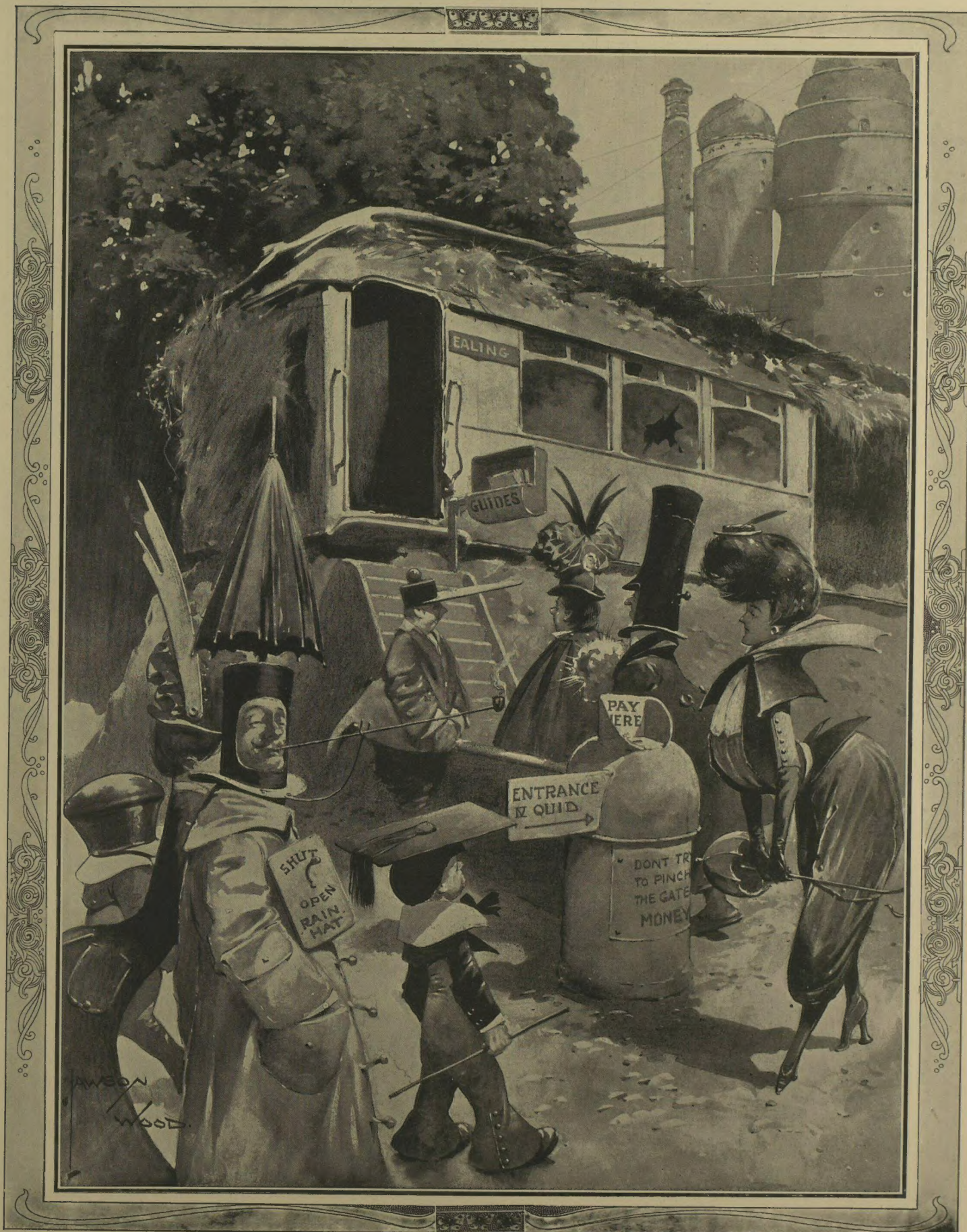


"He is the man, Jim," said the girl in an undertone.

the orderly to take him back to the tent and see that he takes the quinine you send—as I suppose you will."

POSERS FOR POSTERITY: STRANGE FINDS 500 YEARS HENCE.

DRAWN BY LAWSON WOOD.



THE DISCOVERY OF THE STRAP-HANGER'S HOME: DESCRIPTION OF A DISTRICT RAILWAY-CAR.

"Great interest has been aroused by a wonderful relic dug up at Ealing. The contrivance was evidently a refrigerator-hut, for within it was found still intact a series of leather loops to which no doubt the carcases were hung. By a cunning arrangement of doors and windows a continuous icy draught was maintained, and this could hardly be equalled by our own improved methods. The description 'Ealing' on the outside seems to prove that the hutch belonged to that little village—the centre of the pickled-mutton industry."—[FROM "SCIENTIFIC INTELLIGENCE," A.D. 2497.]

POSERS FOR POSTERITY: STRANGE FINDS 500 YEARS HENCE.

DRAWN BY LAWSON WOOD.



UNEARTHING THE POPULAR L.C.C. STEAMBOAT.

"While a party of scientists were burrowing about in the Thames Valley last week, they found in the Putney marshes a structure that has been identified as belonging to an early form of portable soup-kitchen. The evidence suggests that it has been run more as an amusement than as a paying concern, although we should imagine that large profits were earned by it, especially in the winter months, when it would be so greatly in demand among the poorer classes."—[FROM "SCIENTIFIC INTELLIGENCE," A.D. 247.]

CHAPTER III.

"I meant to tell him yesterday, Jim," said the girl in an undertone, glancing with almost maternal solicitude at her father, who was writing within, his grey, somewhat bald head shining out, in the light of the lamp by which he was working, against the intense shadowy darkness of the tent walls, "but that disappointment about the lost city wasn't, so to say, propitious. And to-day there was that letter from Hausmann about the coin somebody has discovered which has quite upset him. Poor father," she added, turning to her lover again, "it will be hard on him. Did you notice how he said it was but fifteen years . . ."

She broke off and looked out into the night. The stars were showing overhead through the fine fret of the kikar trees, though the horizon still held a hint of the day that was dead. Against this paler background she fancied she could see—itsself a shadow, yet half-hidden by shadow—that curving dome as of a new world forcing its way through the crust of the old, or an old one through the new.

"It was odd about those photographs, wasn't it?" she said irrelevantly. "He must be five years older than I am."

"His age is honoured by the comparison."

"My dear Jim," she interrupted, opening her eyes, "this unfortunate goatherd seems—"

"I said he was fortunate, I think. But I admit hating things I don't quite understand."

"Then you must hate me—now don't be angry," she added: "I mean no blame. I very often don't understand myself."

"I know that—and that is why I want this business settled and clear—you—you seem so far off sometimes."

There was a passion in his voice; he stretched his hands out to her as she stood apart, her filmy dinner dress looking ghostly and elusive seen half in the dark, half by the feeble light from within the tent.

She stretched out her hands also, but there was all the world between his almost pathetic appeal and her almost amused repulse.

"You must make haste and find that ducat, Jim. I feel sure that without it—and especially in his present mood—father will never consent—"

He certainly did not seem in a consenting frame of mind as he came out to them with the offending letter from Hausmann in his hand.

"I've answered it," he said sternly, "but as the man is an ass, he will most likely miss the point, which is, of course, Kapala's description of this coin. He says distinctly that it has one profile superimposed on another with the legend beneath, and the date below the flower on the obverse. Really, child, I think I will get you to figure it for me, since Hausmann seems unable to understand words."

"You could use the handsome goatherd as a model, you know,"

an uncommon type in India nowadays, though one sees it elsewhere. Queenie has it partly—your mother had Russian blood in her, you know."

"Perhaps that is why I feel so interested in Khesroo," said the girl, looking coldly askance at her lover.

"Oh, by the way," put in her father, breaking in on his own indignation



"The sun must have held two pictures of you."

and the silence which ensued between those two who loved each other—a silence which both felt to be at once incomprehensible yet inevitable, intolerable yet in a way fascinating—"that reminds me. The orderlies reported he was bad with fever to-night. Send him over some more quinine."

"I'll take it, if you like," said Jim Forrester, faintly penitent.

She looked at the two men with disdainful tolerance. "I will see him first. One never knows what these people call fever—it may be pneumonia."

She moved off as she spoke, into the night, meaning to cross over towards the orderlies' tent, then paused to glance back at the figure which followed. "Are you coming too?" she said curtly. "I can manage all right."

"Of course I am coming!" replied Jim Forrester. "It is pitch dark, to begin with, and I can at least help you to find your patient. I think you had better keep outside the camp, so as to avoid the tent-ropes—it isn't any longer, really."

It was, if anything, shorter, but it brought them instantly into the grip, as it were, of the desert, which crept hungrily upon the camp on all sides; so that, ere they had gone five steps beyond the canvas wings of the tent, they seemed as much alone, as far from conventional twentieth-century life, as they had been two days before, when they first sat together as betrothed lovers in the sunset of a world of curves telling the tale of eternal, of unseen circlings. Even so much of Life's secret was invisible now. All they saw was a darkness they knew to be wilderness, a dim outline of themselves close together, hand in hand. For with the knowledge that they were alone—perhaps with the memory of the wilderness—they had clasped hands instinctively, and for the time the sense of stress and strain had passed.

It returned again, however, with curious vividness, as, right in their path, a shadow dim as their own showed suddenly.

She knew who it was instinctively before it spoke.

"I thought you had fever," she said. "Why are you here?"

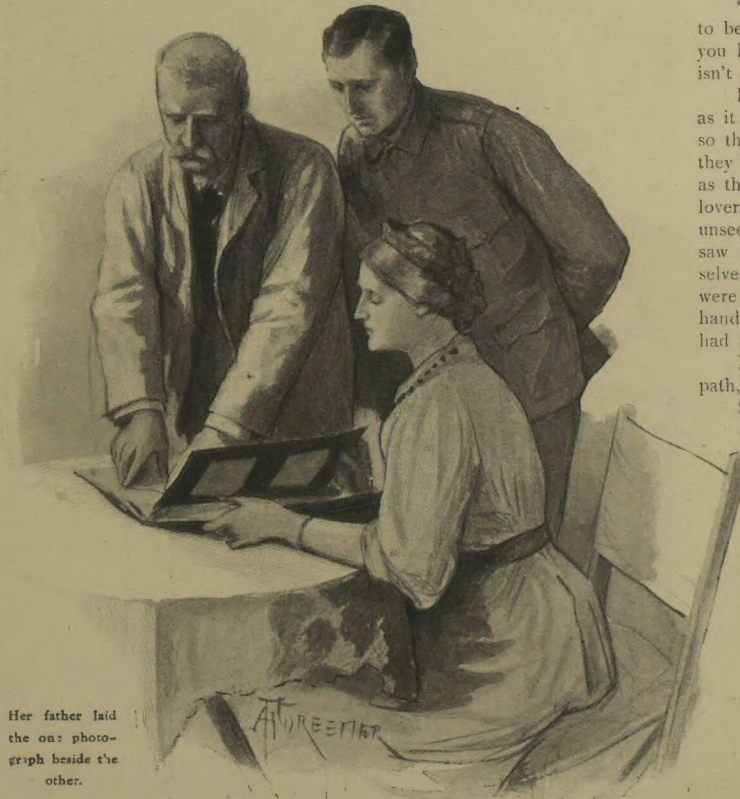
"I have been waiting the graciousness of the queen-lady," came the reply, and the voice was buoyant with joyous vitality. "I have to tell her my dreams—the fever always brings dreams, and I remember now! Yea! I remember all things from the beginning. So if she will come, I will show her the lost city where we lived, and she will dream the dream also."

Dimly, in the darkness, she fancied she could see the shining of his eyes, see his beckoning hand. What her lover saw was a movement of the shadow towards the wilderness; what he felt was a faint increase in the distance between his hand and hers which made him claim it again.

"Queenie!" he cried, "what are you thinking of? You can't possibly go now. The man is delirious with fever—surely you hear that in his voice. You had better come back to the tent and let me send someone to take him into shelter and look after him."

For an instant no one spoke, and then it seemed almost a bodiless voice from the desert which broke the silence, for in his desire to detain her Jim Forrester had drawn the girl back a pace or two, so that the darkness lay deeper between their two shadows and that third one nearer the wilderness.

"Let the queen-lady decide for herself. If she comes, I will show her



Her father laid the one photograph beside the other.

remarked Jim Forrester, vaguely surprised at his own irritation; "your father said his features were Scythic."

"Yes!" assented the numismatist abstractedly as he tried to re-read part of the offending missive by the distant light of the lamp; "rather

all forgotten things—the golden crown that is not plaited hair, the golden coin that was made for the lovers—

"Jim," she whispered almost fiercely, "do you hear? It is the gold coin—it is waiting to be found. I must go—"

"This is pure folly," protested the young Englishman. "If anyone has to go I will, of course. But what hurry is there? Why not wait till to-morrow—now, do be reasonable, Queenie, and consider—"

She ceased trying to release her hand, and when she spoke again it was in a natural tone.

"Yes. I forgot that. Khesroo, I will come with you to-morrow. It will be easier by daylight. Go back to the orderlies' tent now, and I will send you over some more medicine, and when the fever has gone—"

"The dreams will have gone too," came the voice out of the night; but it, also, was more natural, more like that of Khesroo the goatherd. "I shall forget again, and then the gold coin that was struck for her and her lover—"

"For her and her lover," echoed the girl softly. "Did you hear, Jim? I must go and get it for you."

"Long—long ago—" came the voice again.

She echoed the words almost inaudibly this time, and Jim Forrester drew her closer as he said sharply—"If anyone goes I will; but I don't see—"

The voice interrupted him. "But the queen-lady sees. She is like her mother; she sees pictures in the sun. Of course, the Huzoor can come; but if the queen-lady really wants this thing—if she believes—if she trusts—"

"Let me go, Jim! let me go!"

"You shall not," he cried, seizing her round the waist in swift antagonism to some unseen influence, in sudden consciousness of conflict.

And so to both him and her in the darkness and stillness of the desert, within a few steps only of quiet, comfortable, commonplace civilisation, came like a whirlwind a perfect tumult of bewildering emotions, and all the deathless forces which never slumber or sleep in their work of moulding the soul of man, leapt from silence into speech. Love, jealousy, hatred, resolve, high courage—all these seemed to sweep through their every fibre of mind and body, leaving them breathless, wondering, uncertain if they were awake or dreaming, if they were real or mere shadows of a reality which Time cannot touch or alter. For an instant only they were conscious of all this—but the instant might have been an hour in its suggestion of infinite experience.

Then Time claimed them once more, time and trivialities and commonsense, so that ten minutes afterwards Jim Forrester, having made his preparations for a tramp into the desert, was stooping to say good-night to his betrothed and to assure her of his speedy return. The moon would rise in half-an-hour, the distance to the place where they had first met Khesroo could not be over three miles, he would be back by midnight.

Meanwhile, she could tell her father he had turned in, but if she chose herself to sit up—well . . .

As their lips met lingeringly, a little breeze that had wandered from the desert shifted a ripple or two on the sand-waves about their feet, and died away like a sigh in the fine fret of the kikar trees above the unseen tents.

CHAPTER IV.

It was an hour before dawn.

The desert itself could scarcely have been stiller than the camp. In the white moonlight the white tents looked like some shrouded city of the dead, forgotten yet unburied; for, here and there, some out in the moonlit open, others flecked with the fine shadow of the kikar trees, lay corpse-like figures swathed in sheets, as if waiting for their graves. There was no sound, no

sign of life, not even where the moonlight, slanting through the still wide-set wings of the drawing-room tent, showed the folds of a woman's dress, the daintiness of a high-heeled shoe.

The rest of the figure was in shadow, though the light, in its last effort against the darkness of the tent, claimed the pages of the open book which lay on the sleeping girl's lap, and turned one of them into a silver framing for the photograph of a child. So vivid was the light that even the fine feminine writing, beneath it showed in the dead woman's verdict—

"The Son of a King."

For the girl had been pondering over the strange chance which had brought her, in her turn, within the influence of this nameless kingship when, as she waited for her lover's return, she had fallen asleep in her chair. And yet, as she had sat there, thinking, watching, she had felt very wide awake indeed. Not with anxiety, however; that had passed. In fact, as she followed in her mind what had gone before Jim Forrester's quite prosaic start to walk three or four miles into the wilderness on a moonlight night to be shown the bearings of a buried city and possibly to be given proof positive that there were ruins beneath the sand, she had been in grave doubt as to what had actually occurred. Had there been conflict? Had love and jealousy and hatred and resolve risen up and claimed them all? Surely not. Why, indeed, should it be so? Though, doubtless, in her, in her lover, in the goatherd, there was something held, as it were, in common yet which had struggled to be individual, separate.

And this had been most marked between the young Englishman and the goatherd. Unaccountable as it was, she felt that in some mysterious fundamental mind of hers these two were associated indissolubly—that they stood towards her on the same plane. Nay, more! that it was the consciousness of this which kept her calm, which overbore the possibility of future danger, the memory of past conflict. What harm could happen to the Son of a King or with the Son of a King?

The phrase had been on her lips as she fell asleep. It was on them as she awoke and stood up suddenly, the open book sliding soundless from her lap into the soft sand. But the phrase brought no comfort with it now. Had she been asleep for long? Had her lover returned? Was it past midnight?

The anxious questions surged up through the crust of calm before she was half awake, and instinctively she was outside the tent in a moment on



"Let me go, Jim! let me go!"

her way towards her lover's, her rapid feet, shod in the dainty high-heeled slippers, dimpling the shifting sand.

The coming dawn had sent cloud heralds to the west, and an advanced pursuivant, drifting across the moon, shadowed all things faintly and seemed to increase the silence.

[Continued on page 13.]

POSERS FOR POSTERITY: STRANGE FINDS 500 YEARS HENCE.

DRAWN BY LAWSON WOOD.



THE DISCOVERY OF THE FRAGRANT MOTOR-CAR.

"Owing to a landslide during harvest operations, some farm hands discovered a wonderful chaff-cutter used in the time of Edward VII. The presence, near the relics, of Government official weapons, tends to show how carefully it was watched to see that no harm came to it. By an ingenious arrangement of pipes it evidently diffused sweet odours while at work."—[FROM "SCIENTIFIC INTELLIGENCE," A.D. 2497.]

POSERS FOR POSTERITY: STRANGE FINDS 500 YEARS HENCE.

DRAWN BY LAWSON WOOD.



THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY SECTION OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM. A.D. 2407.

"The sections of the British Museum devoted to relics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have lately been enriched with many valuable exhibits, unearthed for the most part during excavations in and around London. The curator has with infinite patience and learning discovered the name and use of most of the utensils and objets d'art. Most remarkable, perhaps, is the copy of what must have been the chief scientific newspaper of the twentieth century. Unfortunately only the front page remains, but the austere and classic beauty of the figure, symbolically posed with her tablets beside the terrestrial globe and the dome of St. Paul's, is conclusive enough proof of the high seriousness of the publication. It is a thousand pities that we can only guess at the contents of 'The Sketch,' the loss of which to learning is a catastrophe paralleled only by the burning of the Library at Alexandria."—[FROM "SCIENTIFIC INTELLIGENCER," A.D. 2407.]

She called softly; there was no reply, so she looked in. A glance told her that her lover had not returned, and the light stealing in through the uplifted screen showed her by the travelling-clock hung to the tent-pole that it was already past three o'clock.

Three! What had happened—and what was to be done? For an instant the ordinary inrush of anxiety made her think of rousing the camp, of sending out search-parties; but the next brought her a curious conviction that in this case danger lay in seeking outside help: a certainty that in this matter she must stand alone, that in this crisis—whatever it was—there must be but three alone—if, indeed, there were three—herself, her lover, and this nameless Son of a King.

So almost without a pause, the dimples left by her rapid feet were curving towards the highest sand-wave within sight of the camp. Thence she could watch the desert sea, and perhaps find him, even now, close at hand. But once there, the next sand-wave attracted her as being a better point of vantage, and so from wave to wave she flitted in her white dress like some desert bird, leaving behind her a curved track of dimples in the sliding sand, until a little wind, the herald blast of the hurrying clouds overhead, crept low down over the world and swept the dimples back into the old ripples.

"Khesroo!" she called suddenly, for a shadow seemed beside hers in that empty wilderness; but there was no answer.

"Jim!" she called again, uncertainly; but there was no reply.

Yet she was not frightened. She knew now, in that mysterious fundamental mind of hers, that she alone was responsible, that she, and she only, could solve the riddle. Khesroo had been right. If she had wanted this thing, if she had believed, if she had trusted, she would have gone before. And now she must hurry, or it would be too late—wherefore or for what she scarcely considered.

"Khesroo!" she called once more, and this time there was a faint inflection of fear in her voice; for was that figure Khesroo, the goatherd, or was it her lover? Or was it neither; but someone only of whom she had dreamt as the Son of a King?

Should she go back? The wish struck her keenly, but she ignored it, and went on. She must, she knew, have left the camp far behind her, and, if she had kept the right direction, would soon be close on the spot where that straight line of an arrow had startled her by its intrusion into her dream of love.

If she had kept it! And surely she had, for behind her the east was faintly lightening for the dawn. Yonder, therefore, in the dark of the heralding clouds which had huddled upon the western horizon must lie the domed shadows of the buried city.

"Khesroo!" she cried instinctively, the very soul of her speaking, "Show it to me! For the sake of the woman who died, as women die for a life of love, a love of life, show it to me!"

And then behind her she heard a voice chanting, as Khesroo, the goatherd had chanted, the call of guidance for the wanderers in the desert. Yet the words were different; for these were they—

Seekers for sleep, arise!
Your rest is done.
Go forth with weary eyes
To find your prize
In vain, in vain! To none
Will slumber have begun
I'll from the heart of one
Desire dies.

Listening she turned to look, then realised that in her searching she must once more have circled back on her own footsteps, for behind and not before her, dark, clear, unmistakable, the domed shadow of the lost city lay against the lightening east. And on its swelling side as Khesroo had stood before, he stood again. Was it the rising sun which turned the fillet of knotted cord about his head

to gold?—which dyed the coarse blanketing to royal purple, and transformed the wearer into the perfect kingliness of buoyant youth and beauty? She never knew. She only felt that something stronger than herself caught her, held her, clasped her, and yet drew her on, so that with hands outstretched she ran towards it, crying between smiles and tears:

"The Son of a King! The Son of a King!"

The next instant she had tripped and fallen heavily on her face over a tangled tuft of grass concealing an unusually deep descent of a desert wave. As she picked herself up, confused, somewhat dazed, and paused to free her eyes from the sand grains which clouded them, something almost at her feet brought her back to realities, and she gave a quick exclamation. For in the hollow beneath the wave where he had evidently sought shelter deliberately, Jim Forrester lay curled up comfortably, fast asleep. At least, so it seemed, though Khesroo's quaint old bow must surely make rather an uncomfortable pillow.

She stooped over the sleeping man and for an instant her face whitened; she bent lower to listen to his breathing. And as she listened a couple of startled sand-chaffs fled from a neighbouring thorn bush, their chuckling cry echoing over the desert like an evil laugh.

But a minute afterwards in answer to her touch Jim Forrester was staring at her trying to collect his sleep-scattered senses.

"Hullo!" he said slowly. "How on earth did I—Ah! I remember. That brute of a goatherd played the garden ass and I lost him, so after wandering about for hours, I turned in till daylight. But you—my dearest dear—"

He started to his feet as he realised her presence there, and held out both his hands to her.

As he did so, something dropped from them and lay glittering on the sand at his feet.

It was a gold coin.

They looked at each other amazed; then she stooped and picked it up.

"A double profile," she said slowly, holding it so as to catch the growing sunlight, "and the legend round"—she spelt it out from the Greek lettering—"Basileus Basileon."

"And the date," he cried, "the date!"

"Yes, the date is there," she replied, still more slowly turning to the obverse, "the bird and the date—it is all right—but I was thinking of the other—"

"What other?"

"Basileus Basileon—the King of Kings," she said softly, and looked out towards the sunrise. But the light had claimed the whole world and sent all shadows flying.

So happily, provisionally they went home to breakfast. Yet there was one thing which she never told anyone, perhaps because it might have stood in the way of the popular explanation of the whole affair—namely, that Khesroo had happened on the coin and must have put it in Jim Forrester's hand after the latter fell asleep. So,

not even when her father proudly pointed out to admirers that the double profile was that of a man and a woman, and that the latter, curiously enough, might almost be a portrait of his married daughter, did she ever say that when she found her husband asleep in the sand that morning, the looped bowstring of Khesroo the goatherd's bow was loose about his neck.

But she often wonders if it would have been drawn tighter had she not gone to seek for what she wanted.

[THE END.]

She stooped over
the sleeping man.

As Khesroo had stood before,
he stood again.

CUPID'S MIRROR.



SEEN WITH THE EYES OF LOVE: "THE YOUNG AT HEART NEVER GROW OLD."

DRAWN BY MAX COWPER.

Romeo in Ecstasy and Error.



"BUT STAY, SHE COMES!"

DRAWN BY PERCY F. S. SPENCE.

THE CURTAIN DOWN.

DRAWN BY G. SPURRIER.



A DISAPPOINTMENT FOR THE STROLLING PLAYERS: NO CHRISTMAS DINNER!

A ARGUMENT

by MAARTEN MAARTENS

Illustration by L. Daviel.

"NO!" said Baas Slimmer, standing, his legs apart, among the cackling hens and chickies of his farm-yard. "No! No! No!" He said each "no" louder, till the last was quite a shout. Nobody minded much; the whole place was full of live-stock, but everybody was thinking of himself. Of his, or her, immediate opportunities for eating more than was good for them. It was feeding-time, as could be perceived by the distant grunts and shrieks and lowings from the outhouses on opposite sides of the great open square. The farmer himself had thrown an indignant handful of corn amongst his couple of hundred barn-door fowls, and the lot of them were fighting and squeaking and treading the babies under-foot. The infants emerged, with a *pee-ep*, and hastily swallowed their share.

"No!" shouted the Baas.

The buxom farm-wife came out at the open door—one of those Dutch back-doors that break in half, so you can lean over the middle and chat. She cared, up to a reasonable point of disturbed placidity. For with the happy *insouciance* of the so-called dumb creatures, who are not dumb at all, only deaf, mercifully deaf, to the cruel things we say—with the cheerful ignorance about coming evils which is God's chief boon to His beasts in a world of suffering, with this foolishly blessed indifference to possibilities, the thousand little souls (of a sort) that filled the farm and its fields remained callous to the moods of the man who was lord of the life of each one of them. We men can do a lot of harm, and we willingly do it, but it is only to one another that we can cause prospective pain. And that, really, under the circumstances, is something the brutes, if they knew, might be thankful for. The farm-wife, when her master barked very loud, had to come and see what was the matter. Though she knew, from long experience, that a many barks went to one bite.

"Dear, dear!" she said, standing with a big scarlet platter against her hip. "And what are you shouting at now, Slimmer? The wind? It'll blow, all the same."

"Why, that's out of the Bible too!" replied Slimmer.

"Dear me, so it is," said the farm-wife, pleased.

"Don't you go quoting the Bible at me like Stott," continued Slimmer grumpily. "'Tisn't fair." He looked round on the hens scuffling all about his feet. "A body can't say nothing in answer to the Bible," he said. "The Bible isn't argument." "Argument," he called it. "The Bible isn't argyment. No more than *that* is!" He pointed to the squabbling fowls. "There's no sense in *that*, and the Bible's above sense, but neither of them's argyment."

Vrouw Slimmer had long ago abandoned all attempts at unravelling her husband's tangled syllogisms. She never even puckered her brows now over them, she simply said, "What were you shouting at?"

"I wasn't shouting. I was argyving the matter out to myself. Is it yes or no? I was asking myself quite gently. And I reasoned out that it was no."

The farm-wife shrugged her shoulders. "All that fuss," she said scornfully, "about killing a pig."

"A pig!" bellowed the farmer. "As if I should argyfy about a pig!"

"You'd argyfy about anything, Slimmer. I thought it was that mangy black porker that the butcher from Overstad was wanting to buy."

"You were wrong, then," remarked Slimmer, pulling out his pipe, "as you always are. You just jump at things, like all women. Poor unreasonable things! They jabber and jabber: they haven't time to argyfy."

"Poor things!" said the Vrouw, sarcastic.

"Now a man like me," continued the Baas, "he always knows when he's wrong. For why? He reasons it all out, and he sees at once where he went off his count. It's like counting apples. You can't say there's twenty-four, if I've counted twenty-three." He faced her triumphantly. "You can't say there's twenty-four—"

"Oh, yes, yes," she interrupted, turning back to her kitchen, "I can reason too," she called, hastily. "There's something smelling that means a burn!" she called, and disappeared.

But she was back again, soon enough, leaning over her green-painted door. "Now what's this fresh fuss about?" she asked in a wheedling tone.

"Fuss?" he answered sardonically, pulling at his pipe. "There's no fresh fuss, no more than there was this morning. Trust a woman to come fussing about a fuss."

"Well, a woman didn't begin it this morning," expostulated Vrouw Slimmer.

"And what's Stott but an old woman?" came the adroit reply. "I don't call him a man. He's an old woman, he is."

"And what were you shouting 'no' about?" wheedled the farm-wife. "About Koos? We'll soon see, if the boy's as good as Stott thinks. And I hope he may be. You weren't bothering your head about that?"

Her husband eyed her under his drooping lids—a tall, lean man, with a canny face, all wrinkles. "What an intelligent head!" thought the summer visitors, as they watched him gazing up at the preacher in church. The Minister held a different opinion.



"Now, was I right or was I wrong?"

"Curious!" said Slimmer slowly. "That curious! A woman'd pull down a stone wall to see if there wasn't a toad inside!"

"And quite right, too," replied his better half, "if the poor things live in 'em a thousand years, as I've heard, without bite nor—"

"There never was a woman since Eve—"

"Oh, be quiet about Eve. That's all most of you men read your Bibles for—to say snappy things to us about Eve!"

"Woman, you're profane," replied the Baas, "as profane as the hens." And they both laughed, he noiselessly, she aloud. For, at this morning's "Visiting," the solemn annual event, when the Minister calls with an elder and exhorts the whole household, collected in the kitchen, had not a fat white hen, in the midst of the proceedings, scratched her way into the Minister's wideawake hat in a corner on the floor, and there laid a much be-cackled egg? And had it not proved quite impossible afterwards to make Miekien and Piet and the rest of the dull, rubicund farm-servants realise that here was only an episode which everybody ought to forget? Nay—far worse—this is what actually occurred:

The hen ran about and cackled, and the pale-faced Minister, unsmiling, talked on. His Elder, old Jacob Stott, the pork-butcher, sat frowning and wrathful. The

Baas and his wife looked uncomfortable, feeling somehow personally responsible for their fowl: the young people giggled all round.

"And, as I was remarking," declaimed the Minister, "how, if you do not come to church"—raising his voice in the din—"can you expect to be benefited by the sermon?"

"Koos, put that hen out!" shouted Slimmer. The young hand jumped up with alacrity, and made a grab in the direction of the flutter and noise. All he caught was empty space and a bump: he righted himself with another swift sweep at the screeching biped. But the hen had dashed against the farm-wife's petticoats, and up on the great open "Book" and away over Stott's apoplectic head, and everybody had risen now and was talking and laughing at once: only the butcher's gurgling indignant protests. He said it was done on purpose, from opposition to the true "Confession," and hatred of "the Word," just the thing that a Rationalist like Slimmer—but nobody heard him, for they were all far too busy catching the hen.

All, except the farmer's ten-year-old grandson, Tony. Tony had no time for the bird: he was too busy with the egg. He had taken up the egg very quietly, and, with tender solicitude, he had deposited it gently in the middle of the cushions of the Minister's arm-chair. "It would have been a pity," he said softly to himself, "if anybody had stepped on that egg." But once having taken these precautions, it must be admitted that no one joined more vigorously in the search than Master Tony. In fact, it was he who ultimately bundled the hurried heap of feathers out at the door. Then everybody sat down again. The Minister sat down last.

He first stood smoothing the ruffled pages of the Family Bible. He did it with a slow and loving touch. He was giving the people time to collect themselves. And, as a matter of fact, they were eager to do so. They were by no means naturally inclined to irreverence. Far from it. He had taken the best means of calming them, as he stood there, sweetly pensive, his gentle fingers lingering about the sacred page.

Then the Minister sat down on the egg. He let himself down slowly. There wasn't an ear in the kitchen but heard the crunch.

He was a young man, athletic outside, his clerical habit. It was wonderful how quickly he was up again, and had whisked round to inspect the seat of the disturbance. As his other side flashed into view, to the whole of the semicircle, not a mouth, except Stott's, but sent forth a roar! The Minister whisked round once again: he had drawn forth a long white handkerchief; he stood rubbing himself, a lank black figure.

"Can I help your Reverence?" asked the farm-wife, as grave as the circumstances would allow.

"I thank you, Vrouw," replied the Minister. He was young: he was momentarily ridiculous: he felt his high office, and a great deal of stickiness, and a cruel insult from somebody unknown.

But at that stage, in the general atmosphere of hysterical merriment and disapproval, somebody set up a howl. That somebody proved to be Koos, the

charity-child, the new "boy," twelve years old, who had come in last Monday, on sufferance, and done something wrong ever since he came. Everybody looked at him at once, and he howled the louder. The Baas had turned upon him his customary threatening frown.

"'Twasn't me, Baas," he howled. "'Twasn't me!"

"Then who was it?" demanded his master.

"Ay, who was it?" repeated the Minister.

"Did anybody say it was you?" asked the farmer's wife. Tony peeped forth behind his grandmother's skirts.

"The Baas glared at me so!" squeaked the miserable urchin.

"Glare? Do I glare?" cried the furious Slimmer.

"You had better confess!" said the Minister, still mopping. (But you can't mop it off: that's no good.)

"You put it down, without thinking, as you ran after the hen," prompted the Vrouw good-naturedly.

"Without thinking, of course," echoed Slimmer.

"Haven't I pointed out to you a dozen times a day—"

"Confess!" repeated the Minister, for that was his religious solution of every difficulty. "Confess and be absolved"—as the lawyer's is "Confess and be condemned."

"I—I—didn't—"

"Koos!" There was a painful silence. Everybody waited.

"Well, p'raps I did," gasped Koos. He wanted, in the first place, all those eyes off him. There was a general movement of relief.

"Why did you tell lies before?" questioned his master.

"I—I didn't remember. If I did it, it must have been as missus says, when I was running after the—I must have caught it up to save it and put it down without thinking—" He hurried on, along his only plausible line of defence.

"You come straight away with me," said Baas Slimmer darkly. "Ever since I took ye, ye've been getting into mischief. And now to go playing such a trick on his Reverence! And to tell lies over it! You're a wicked boy, you are! I'll teach you to tell lies. You're a liar!" He walked to the door; the boy howled louder than ever.

"He isn't," interposed a burly voice; "he isn't." Butcher Stott stood out, red.

"I won't stand by and hear one of our Church children called names," said Butcher Stott. "He's as good a boy as ever had a good up-bringing. As good as all the other parish boys!"

The Minister smiled apologetically, as a man whose duty it is to recognise a fallacy, when he sees one.

"Four-and-twenty year," continued Butcher Stott, "have I been a member of the board, Slimmer. You don't trouble about that sort of work for others, you don't. And never a boy but has turned out well, in all that time, thanks to *our* up-bringing. Every mother's son of 'em has done well," he repeated emphatically, "except them as did better, and died." His voice dropped; there must have been a soft spot somewhere in the big, apoplectic pork-butcher. He walked across and deliberately placed his fat hand on the sobbing boy's shock head.

"No, he didn't do it! He didn't do it," squeaked Tony in a frightened treble.

"Hush, child; you shut your silly mouth!" admonished his grandmother, and pushed him back behind her ample gown.

"Don't advance more than you can prove, brother Stott," suggested the Minister gently; but that was fuel to the fire with the Elder, well known to be as stubborn as he was soft.

"I can prove every word of it," said Stott doggedly. "And that's more than Slimmer can do. There was Kypkens, that drives his blue gig this day; there was Pottel, that wags his tongue in the—I beg your Reverence's pardon! But, there! It's casting pearls before swine, not including your Reverence, of course." He shook himself and stepped back. "That boy's a good boy," he persisted—"like all the rest. It's the edification"—he meant education—"does it."

"A boy can be edified, and go wrong all the same!" cried Slimmer. "To say a boy can't go wrong 'cause he's been taught different isn't argument."

"Isn't argment? Isn't argment?" stuttered Stott.

"No, brother, no; it isn't argument," said the Minister. He was still rubbing. Occasionally he stopped, but then, in sheer stickiness, began again.

"Isn't argment?" cried Stott, purple in the face, falling back and staring at the lot of them. "And, pray, what does the Scripture mean, your Reverence, when it says: 'Bring up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, when he is old—'" He floundered. Nobody helped him out.

"That boy isn't old," objected the argumentative Slimmer.

"You say it, Koos—" Stott pushed the child forward.

"He will not depart from it," said the charity-child.

"The devil can quote Scripture to his purpose," remarked the Baas sententiously. And the servants all hee-hawed with delight at their master's 'cuteness. Oh, he was 'cute, was old Slimmer. Better not 'argy' with him.

"But he can't change it," retorted Stott triumphantly. He had his triumph, if it was one, all to himself. Slimmer's servants understood only Slimmer's successes. And the Minister disapproved, as unprofessional, of theological discussions, in his presence, by members of his flock.

"These children," continued the pork-butcher, Elder, and poor-guardian, unabashed, "have been brought up in the path. They were never whipped, but they were told it was the path, and so they couldn't depart from it. See this boy say his text pat! He's a good boy or the Bible is wrong, Minister. You can't get away from that!"

"H'm! H'm!" said the Minister.

"Now which is it to be, your Reverence?"

Slimmer came to his pastor's rescue. "The Bible isn't argment," he said.

"You're an infidel," responded the Elder. "It's rank blasphemy to hear you talk, and his Reverence standing by. Now, the children that's brought up in *your* house"—he pointed a fat finger at Tony, who had ventured forward, open-mouthed, and now hastily retreated—"if *they* was to go losing their bearings, it wouldn't be—"

"You leave that child alone!" burst out the grandfather, suddenly infuriated. "That child's been brought up by an angel in heaven." His voice faltered. "If that child isn't as good as gold, then your Bible is *wrong*," he said.

"Hush, hush!" interposed the Minister. There was no use surely in continuing the Visitation. He lifted his hands for the benediction and passed majestically out. A titter ran behind him.

"I'd better take this boy along with me, as he doesn't suit," said the Elder, pausing near the doorway. The boy's heart gave a leap.

"And who's to pay me for the damage he's done?" demanded Slimmer. He pointed to the chair. "My mother's chair," he said solemnly. "She stitched every stitch of it herself."

"The pretty doves with the olive-branch," said the sorrowing Vrouw.

"They'll think it's the Flood, begun over again," replied the heartless Elder. He reflected: the place

was a good one; the couple worthy, in spite of the husband's fierce manner at times. "I'll leave him with you," he said measuredly, "if you'll promise not to ill-treat him. I'll leave him with you a whole month, to work off the damage, and that's handsome, for if he done it, he done it by accident, and no harm intended. And, at the end of that month, you'll tell me he's a good boy, and then"—he threw out his chest—"then we'll *know* who was right!" He waved his hand to the Vrouw. "I can trust *you*," he said. "Slimmer is cranky, and his religion isn't orthodox. But you'll do the right thing by me and the boy, and the blessed Bible, and you won't say he's a bad boy, when he isn't."

"Well, brother?" queried the Minister, turning back to the door.

"Coming, your Reverence. Is it a bargain, Vrouw?"

The boy was a strong boy and a willing. "I'll keep him a month," said Slimmer, nodding. "And if he's a good boy all the time—well, that's argment." He walked out after the Minister, showing him respectfully across the yard.

"It was *his* imp. I saw it myself," whispered Miekien to Piet.

"Hold your tongue. 'Tis as much as your place is worth," answered Piet. "See how the master burst out when they talked about his daughter!"

For, indeed, all that was happiest in Hendrik Slimmer had been put away, a few months ago, in his darling daughter's grave. All her life she had done what he wanted her to do, excepting in the important case of her marriage, and then he had argued himself into accepting her point of view. It had taken him three months, but he had done it. It was natural, after all, that a girl should love a smart young soldier: it was reasonable that the soldier should carry her off to the Indies. It wasn't illogical that he, being a brave man, should fall there in battle, dying a hero's death. The widow need not have followed him within a year, consigning her only boy to her parents. Still, even that was like the dear, fond, beautiful creature. She could do no wrong, and whatever she stood responsible for, including Tony, must be reasoned out right. Thus it was that a couple of hours after the Minister had left, Baas Slimmer stamped about the courtyard, meeting Stott's base insinuation of possible error in the immaculate grandchild with an ever-increasingly vehement "No!"

"Imagine!" he said to Vrouw Slimmer. "Comparing Katrina's child with a ne'er-do-well parish waif!"

"But he *was* strong," objected the wife, frowning heavily, "with his Bible argment."

"Stuff and nonsense!" cried the exasperated farmer. "I tell you the Bible *isn't* argment. The Bible's religion. 'The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.' *That's* common-sense. I've been thinking it out ever since the Minister went. That's proverbs, and proverbs is the aggravated wisdom of the centuries, as I read the other day, and it's very true!"

"Is it Bible proverbs?" asked the good wife anxiously.

"No, it's not. It's just human reasoning. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree."

"But the other must be true, if it's in the Bible," said the Vrouw.

He exploded at female perversity, and strode up and down, kicking his feet right and left, so that the fowls scurried away all around him.

"Then the boy didn't lie about not having done it? he cried. "And he didn't confess afterwards that he had? And he didn't put the egg into the Minister's chair, making us a scandal and a disgrace, with our Visitation, all over the village? Oh, you old women, Stott and you!"

"We shall soon see what he's made of," she said, troubled.

He came back to her. "We shall indeed," he said, dropping his voice. "Off he goes in half-an-hour, or I'm much mistaken. I've given him a big bag of apples to count. There, count 'em, I says; 'I don't know how many there are.' But I *do* know. There's two hundred and thirteen. There'll not be more than two hundred and twelve, I guess, in that sack, when he brings it round to me."

"Oh, is that fair?" she exclaimed.

"Fair? It's what they call a Jew-dicial inquiry. Proof positive of Elder Stott's upbringing—yah! Do you think I'm going to be beaten in an argment by Elder Stott? D'y'e think"—he came and stood in front of her—"there's a soul in the village don't know I can argy better than Elder Stott? Where'd I be—tell me that," he cried, "if I was beaten in an argment by Elder Stott?"

"You can't beat the Bible," she said stolidly.

"A pork-butcher," he answered, "Yah!"

"And they do bring up the children as good as gold," she added.

"I do believe you want the boy to prove an angel," he said.

"Yes, I do. Poor little orphan chap!"

At this moment the youth in question appeared in the door of an outhouse and advanced, stumbling under the weight of his bulgy sack.

"Come along!" cried the farmer. "Come here, Koos! Put it down, boy. Put it down. Now, how many apples are there in that sack?"

The boy thrust his burden from him and waited a moment, gasping for breath.

"Now then, speak up!" cried the farmer triumphantly. "And let me tell you beforehand that I know!"

"If you know, why must I tell you?" said Koos.

"None of your lip to me!" cried Slimmer. "You answer me immediately! Now?"

"There's two hundred and thirteen. I counted 'em three times," said Koos.

"Aha!" exclaimed the Vrouw. Her husband turned on her. "Hold your tongue, you fool!"

The boy looked surprised. "Tony helped me to count," he said.

"Aha!"—it was the farmer's turn, a great deal louder than his wife. His little plan of proof had failed, but no

wonder. Frustrated by the presence of that innocent child. "Very well!" he said with dignity. "Very well. Go away now, and do something else."

"And what am I to do, please, master?"

"Ask Piet," said the Baas, collecting his thoughts.

"Go and clean yourself for dinner," said the farm-wife. The boy slouched away.

"Please, Baas, I want a word with you!" spoke Miekien. She was scarlet in the face, but, then, she was always that. Her manner, however, betokened unusual agitation.

"Be quick, then! I don't want to be bothered."

"Piet says it's as much as my place is worth, but I can't help it. I can't stand by and see the innocent respected." (Suspected, she meant.)

"You mind your own business, Miekien!"

"Why, isn't this a Jew-dicial inquiry?" cried the Vrouw. Her curiosity was eager for a cue.

"It was Tony put the egg down: I saw him do it," gasped the maid.

There was a moment's silence. Then the Baas said—"I don't believe it."

"I can prove it," cried Miekien.

"If it's proved, I must believe it," cried Slimmer.

"For Piet saw him too," said the maid. "And so did Koos, for the matter of that."

"Well, after all, it was only a bit of mischief, in the child," began the Vrouw. "He didn't mean no serious harm. And an egg's a very tempting thing, for a bit of mischief, for any child, and so it is!"

"Go, Miekien," said the farmer, with averted face.

"Go, tidy yourself for your dinner."

"And you come too, Baas," said the wife.

"No, no, I don't want any dinner."

"What nonsense, man!"

"I can't see Tony!" Immediately her manner changed. "Why, husband?" She came close beside him.

"It's not his playing a trick, though I couldn't have done that at his age. But it's his letting us think it was the other boy."

"Why, he's only a child. He was afraid."

"His mother's son couldn't tell a lie, and his father's son wouldn't be afraid. The apple doesn't fall—"

"Oh, you argify and argify!" cried the Vrouw.

"You should stick to your Bible, Slimmer!"

"What?" he exclaimed, exasperated. "You take Stott's side? That's the worst of all. Stott is right, then, and I am wrong?"

"The boy's a good boy, sure enough; he wouldn't tell of Tony. I'll remember that." She nodded meaningly.

"And Stott is right when he argifies that Katrina's child—"

She laughed aloud. "No, he's wrong; don't you see that, stupid? For that child has been trained by an angel, as you said. All the same, he ain't a saint."

"But I'm just as wrong as he," cried Slimmer, "for the apple—"

She put up both hands to her ears. "Oh, you argify, and argify till you're crazed," she said.

Something plucked at her gown.

"Please, grandfather! Please, grandfather!" said a feeble voice. Master Tony stepped in front of the couple. His manner was determined, though his colour was faint. "Please, grandfather, I put the egg there," said Tony, and closed his eyes, awaiting his fate.

"Oh, Tony, how could you be so careless!" cried the condoning Vrouw.

"No, I did it on purpose," said Tony.

"But what for?" demanded his grandfather.

"For fun."

"I don't understand," said Slimmer.

"I do," said the helpful Vrouw.

"But, then, why do you come and tell us now?" persisted the grandfather. "Did Miekien advise you to?"

"Miekien? No; I came of myself," replied the young man proudly. "I remembered what mother always used to say."

"What did she say?" asked the Vrouw, in a whisper.

"Be good if you can, and, if you can't, be honest," came the prompt reply. Radiant, the old woman drew the old man aside. "You'll believe the Bible next time," she said. He turned quickly to his grandson.

"Why didn't you be honest at once?" he said.

"I did try to speak, but grandmother wouldn't let me. So I thought I'd wait till the Minister was gone."

A pause.

"I stayed with Koos, so you couldn't hurt him," continued the child eagerly, "and I helped him with the apples, and I told him I was coming to tell you. And so I did."

Baas Slimmer gazed sternly at his little grandson. "You'll have to go and 'poligise to his Reverence, young man," he said. "And take a note from me to ask his Reverence to punish you as he thinks best."

"Yes, granfer," said Tony, with a gulp.

"I should think, in all probability, he'll give you a good beating." Tony was unable to express his feelings.

"Aren't you afraid to go?"

No answer.

"Say: aren't you afraid?"

"Yes, granfer. But mother said—" A dead stop.

The old Vrouw bent over him. "Well, Tony?"

"Mother said"—a sob—"that father always said,

'twasn't no shame being afraid, but"—another sob—"not doing things, because you was."

"And you think so too, Tony?"

"I'm going to be like father was."

Old Slimmer caught his grandson's arm in a grip that made the young hero squeal. "Now," he turned to his wife with fierce joy, "was I right or was I wrong? An apple—"

"Oh, you argify—" smiled the farm-wife.

"I don't argify," replied her husband impressively.

"I never argify. I goes by proof."



"MISTLETOE."

FROM THE PAINTING BY FANNETT.

FAIRY STORIES BY PHOTOGRAPHY: GRIMM ILLUSTRATED.



THE LITTLE BROTHER AND SISTER: THE LITTLE SISTER PLACING HER GOLDEN GARTER ROUND HER BROTHER'S NECK.

It came about that a little brother and sister wandered through the forest from their wicked step-mother, who followed them, and cast a spell upon the springs and streams. The little brother stooped to drink, when his sister heard in the babbling of the brook, "Whoever drinks of me a tiger will be." So she besought her brother not to drink. The next spring spoke, "Who drinks of me a wolf will be." And again the sister bade her brother wait. From the third streamlet came the words, "Who drinks of me a stag will be." Here the little brother's thirst became so great that he would drink, and the moment the water touched

his lips he became a fawn. Then the little sister took off her golden garter, and placed it round the fawn's neck as a collar. One day afterwards a King and his huntsmen saw the beautiful fawn, and hunted him from morn to night, and followed him into the cottage in which the little sister lived. The King was so enamoured with the girl's beauty that he besought her hand in marriage, and she went with him to his castle, and the fawn with her. Then, one day the step-mother came to the castle, and the King, learning of her cruelty, had her burnt. As she died, the spell she had cast was removed, and the fawn became a boy again.

SETTING BY "THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS"; PHOTOGRAPH OF MISS GLADYS ARCHBUTT BY BASSANO.

FAIRY STORIES BY PHOTOGRAPHY: GRIMM ILLUSTRATED.



HANSEL AND GRETHEL EATING THE ROOF AND WINDOW OF THE LITTLE HUT.

There were once a wood-cutter and his wife who were so poor that one day the man took his son, Hansel, and his adopted daughter, Gretel, into the forest, seeking to lose them, for he could support them no longer; but the children overheard the plan, and, as they went, the boy marked the way by dropping stones from his pocket. So they came home again. Then, once more, the wood-cutter set out to lose them, and once more the children marked the road, but this time they used bread instead of stones, and the birds ate the bread, and they were truly lost. On the third day of their wanderings they came upon a little hut made of bread, with a

roof of cake, and windows of barley-sugar, and they sat down and ate. The owner of this house was a wicked fairy, who used her home as a trap for children. Yet the boy and girl managed to escape, and took with them the fairy's wand. With the aid of this, they were able to change themselves into many things, and so escape the pursuer, but in the end the fairy found them, took the wand again, and with it turned Hansel into a stag. Then, after many days, a King fell in love with Gretel, captured the witch, and brought her to his castle. There he compelled the wicked fairy to change the stag into Hansel; and the King married Gretel and all lived happily ever after.

SETTING BY "THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS"; PHOTOGRAPHS OF MISS DORIS COOPER (GRETHEL) AND MISS GLADYS COOPER (HANSEL) BY BASSANO.



"Caught at the Post."

FROM THE PAINTING BY LAWSON WOOD.

FAIRY STORIES BY PHOTOGRAPHY: GRIMM ILLUSTRATED.



THE PRINCE CLIMBING THE GOLDEN LADDER OF RAPUNZEL'S HAIR.

Once upon a time there lived a poor man and a poor woman, and the woman, coveting the fine lettuces in a sorceress's garden, bade her husband fetch some of them. Now, the sorceress caught the man thieving, but released him on condition that his baby-girl should be given her. This child the witch called Rapunzel, and, as soon as she reached the age of twelve, locked her up in a high tower that had no door, and only one window. When the sorceress wished to enter the tower she stood beneath this window, and croaked "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down thy hair that I may climb without a stair," and the beautiful child would unbind

her golden tresses, so that the locks hung down the walls of her prison. One day a King's son came into the forest, and saw the witch's strange stairway. Next day he came to the tower again, and sang the rhyme he had heard. In answer to it, the golden ladder was let down, and the Prince climbed up. Love came at first sight, and the pair arranged to escape together. The witch, however, learnt of the Prince's visit, banished Rapunzel, and caused her lover to be blinded. So for a year he wandered in misery. Then he came upon Rapunzel, and her tears, falling upon his eyes, gave him sight. Thus the two were enabled to travel to the Prince's country.

SETTING BY "THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS"; PHOTOGRAPHS OF MISS VALLY VALLY (RAPUNZEL) AND MISS GLADYS COOPER (THE PRINCE) BY BASSANO.

FAIRY STORIES BY PHOTOGRAPHY: GRIMM ILLUSTRATED.



THE GOOSE GIRL LISTENING TO FALADA'S HEAD.

A King's daughter rode forth to meet her bridegroom, and with her rode a waiting-maid. The journey had scarce begun when the servant enforced her commands upon her mistress, and at last even compelled her to exchange horses with her, and to give her her regal dress. Thus, when the two came to the castle, the waiting-maid was hailed as the Prince's bride, while the poor Princess was sent to mind geese. Now, Falada, the Princess's horse, could speak, and the false waiting-maid, fearing that it would tell her story, had it killed and its head nailed

over a door through which the geese were driven every day. So it came that when the Princess came to the door the horse spoke to her, and this happened several times. Then the Goose Girl's little companion told the King of these strange happenings, and bade the Goose Girl complain of her troubles to an iron chest. He, meantime, stood behind the closed door listening; and he found that the Goose Girl was, indeed, the Princess. So the false Princess was condemned to be torn to pieces by wild horses, and rolled down a hill in a cask full of spikes till she was dead.



"WHERE THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A WAY."

FROM THE PAINTING BY PERCY F. SPENCE.

RIEN NE VA PLUS

by CARLTON DAWE.

ILLUSTRATED BY L. DAVIEL.

PERHAPS the one and only true republic of the world will be found at Monte Carlo, and what one means by Monte Carlo is not the Principality as a Principality, but the Casino in which the games of chance are played. There all men meet on a common footing, Prince or blackguard being given equal facilities to dispose of his ill-gotten gains. No questions of a moral character ever shock the fastidious or appal the guilty. All men are equal—or, at least, outwardly so—in the eyes of the administration, and Chance alone is King. The people whose doings are chronicled with a wealth of minute detail in the daily and weekly Press are here subjected to a pitiless democratic levelling. Indeed, one often wonders if yonder neglected individual is really the great Duke of Worcester, the man who is such a tremendous big-wig "at home"; or if that stout, elderly, painted and dyed woman who waddles from table to table is really his wife, the Duchess whose curling-tongs and bedroom slippers are photographed in all the illustrateds.

If anyone ever had the slightest doubt of our common origin a sojourn in the rooms would soon rid him of it. And in a manner this is somewhat pleasing to him of simple tastes, though at the same time it is liable to lead him into difficulties. As a rule, it is the label which more or less describes the contents of the bottle. The inference is obvious.

If one were given to conjecture, the crowded rooms on any afternoon or evening in February or March would offer abundant opportunity for an exercise of that quality. But as a rule the only speculation is at the tables. The person next to you may be a Grand Duke or a Grand Rogue. It matters nothing. You care as much for the one as for the other. You have eyes for nothing but the flying marble or the flashing card. Your world is that little strip of green cloth with its cabalistic figures.

And yet occasionally some of us have eyes for other things, though, as a rule, it is not until we have pretty well worked off all our superfluous cash.

I was not quite certain when she took the vacant seat beside me, but I knew it was a woman by the rustle of her skirts, and presently by a subtle and most delicious odour of violets. First of all I looked at her hands. They were daintily gloved in long white kid. One hand was toying with a gold-bag. Beneath her breath she uttered a slight exclamation of annoyance as her stakes were swept away. As mine went at the same time it seemed to establish a kind of confraternity between us. I looked up, a rather lame smile on my face, and encountered a pair of wondrous grey eyes and a pouting mouth.

"Bother!" she said. I felt like using a stronger expletive.

"Messieurs, faites vos jeux," droned the croupier in that exasperatingly impassive style of his. He raked in one's losses or paid out one's winnings with a philosophic calm which jangled the tense nerves.

She hurriedly undid her bag and flung a five-hundred franc note to the nearest croupier. Evidently knowing her, he returned the change in gold. She plastered about half of it round *quatorze*. I put a modest louis

on the *transverse* 10 to 15. Thirty-two turned up, and the rake whipped our little pile into the maw of the bank.

"Bother!" I repeated, as I looked at her. She almost smiled, but the full mouth was pouting perceptibly. I watched her gloved fingers playing a little irritably with the remainder of her five-hundred-franc note.

"After thirty-two, zero," I said, and flung a louis on the space at the top of the table. She uttered a little odd, contemptuous laugh—a laugh which seemed to say, "Well, what does it matter where one puts one's money?" But she followed my lead with a louis. Then, on second thoughts, she gathered up the

her winnings. In the hour of defeat she seemed very human, but in this moment of victory the battle lost all interest for her.

As the pile of notes and gold was pushed across to her I ventured to remark that mine had been a lucky thought.

"Very," she said, and there her appreciation ended. I suppose it was human of me to think she might have shown a little more interest or gratitude. Not that it was gratitude I wanted. Perhaps she knew this.

She doubled her stakes, hoping for a repeat. I was not so sanguine, but took a sporting chance on thirty-two. I saw her eyes follow my louis, but I suppose a sort of gambler's pride forbade her following my lead a

second time. I, however, had noticed that the turner was throwing *voisins*, and when such is the case there is always a chance of catching him.

Again came the quick, sharp "*Rien ne va plus*." For the fraction of a second the marble seemed to hang over the zero; then it slowly rolled into 32.

"*Trente-deux*," droned the croupier, "*rouge, pair et passe*."

"You're in luck," she said.

"I should like to think so. Why didn't you back it?"

"What does it matter?"

Her English was admirable, with just the slightest suspicion of an accent which appeared to be conveyed more by gesture than by speech.

"Not much. It one plays long enough the end will be the same."

"It amuses."

"Without attempting to instruct."

"I hate being instructed."

"It is a bore."

She smiled. "Still, one does not like being beaten."

"And yet we know it will beat us."

This remark was called forth by observing the reckless manner in which she began to stake for the next *coup*.

"Well, you know, we must all be beaten in the end: if not by roulette, then by something much more serious. And it is decidedly interesting—while it lasts."

"You're in luck," she said.

"But we all prefer to win—even at roulette."

"I suppose so."

And yet, to mark the indifference with which she plunged, one would have thought that the winning or losing of large sums did not come into her count of things.

In a very brief period she dissipated the little pile she had so lately accumulated, and then, and not till then, did the old look of annoyance return to her face.

"Cleaned out?" I suggested.

"Not a five-franc piece left," she replied.

"May I—"

"Oh, no; thank you!" This very sharply, with a lifting of the head and a straightening of the shoulders.

"Pardon me. I did not mean to offend."

She smiled at my evident deep contrition. "Of course you did not."

"You are not angry?"

"Not in the least. Why should I be?"

"I was only afraid."

"It was very kind of you, but, do you know, a little unwise."



I could not tell her that I was perfectly willing to be unwise for her sake, though had she been looking into my face, instead of staring vacantly across the table, she might have read the words there plain enough.

"Let me assure you that I do not think so."

"But I am a stranger."

Some thought seemed to amuse her, for as she turned to me eyes and mouth were smiling. I thought those eyes the prettiest in the world. The mouth was singularly tantalising.

"That is no reason why you should always be."

The brows went up ever so slightly. I felt that my tactics lacked decorum.

"Really, you know, I'm afraid we do not understand each other."

"And you think me impertinent? If I have given you such an impression I must be the most stupid creature in the world."

All this while the game rattled on and the punters fought desperate battles with fate. I saw that same amused smile play round the corners of her mouth, and in spite of my presumption I almost thought she was enjoying the incident. Occasionally, as my eyes swept across the table, I encountered the glances of the chef and the croupier opposite, but I was too preoccupied with my own thoughts to take much notice of them. Had I been more observant, or not so full of myself, I might have read a meaning in their looks which would have given me pause. But truly I saw nothing save those wondrous grey eyes, heard nothing but the low, slightly amused tones of the woman beside me.

She lingered for two more *coups*, on both of which I won slightly. Then she pushed back her chair.

"You have really finished?"

"*Rien ne va plus*," she answered with a smile. It was the old cry of the tables, and it might have meant something more to one who had the perception to read it. With her going went all my interest in the game, and shortly after I, too, quitted the table.

For the rest of that afternoon I haunted the rooms in the hope of catching a further glimpse of her, but all to no purpose; nor that evening did she put in an appearance, and as a consequence the place held no attraction for me. I scarcely know how greatly I dared to hope, but that I became possessed of an intense longing to see her again was indubitable. That half-amused and perfectly satisfied smile of hers piqued me curiously. Her indifference to the way the game went was likewise a source of speculation. Women, as a rule, are keen gamblers who betray their keenness in every word and gesture. Yet here was one who bore with the utmost equanimity every slap in the face that fate chose to inflict. It followed, then, that the love of money was not the chief cause of her presence at the tables. And a woman who did not love money was a phenomenon.

In the hope that I might see her again I was up early—that is, early for Monte Carlo—and out on the Terrace shortly after ten o'clock; but with the exception of the solitary guardian I had the sea and the trees to myself. Then I walked round and round the grounds in the hope that I might come upon her in some quiet nook (one must dream even in a practical world), but when I did eventually see her it was on the open space before the Café de Paris. At first I was not sure, she was dressed so simply—that is, by comparison with the woman who had played away her last coin on the previous afternoon. Her plain linen skirt was short, and evidently donned for comfort in walking. She carried a cane in her hand, and I noticed that her shoes were stoutly made. With her was a woman some forty-five years of age, whose hair was beginning to turn grey at the temples: a rather pleasant-looking woman in spite of her blown appearance. She also carried a cane, on which at times she seemed to lean heavily. It was fairly obvious that the two had been for a constitutional, and that the elder woman had reached that stage when enjoyment becomes a fatigue.

As I presented myself before them, hat in hand, both ladies opened wide their eyes in astonishment. Ordinarily I may remark that I am one of the most diffident of men, but in some extraordinary manner my diffidence vanished at the thought of once more gazing into the eyes of my divinity. Certainly she looked very fresh and lovely after her tramp—so bewitching, indeed, that I almost ignored the look of astonishment in her wide eyes.

"You have forgotten me?" I ventured, not a little abashed now that I was actually face to face with her, and yet determined to see the thing through. The ghost of a smile played round her tantalising mouth.

"Did I ever know you, Monsieur?" She spoke in French, and so distinctly that I felt as though the earth were opening suddenly at my feet.

"Well, I suppose not—that is, not exactly. But in a way I thought we were acquainted. My fault, my presumption." If that head would only lower a little, those eyes lose something of their coldly insistent stare.

"Who is this gentleman?" asked the elderly lady, looking at me with some suspicion and speaking with a German accent.

"My dear Marie, I haven't the slightest idea. You see, the gentleman never condescended to tell me his name."

Good-humour lurked round the sweet mouth; those bright eyes were enjoying the curious solemnity of my face.

"Let me make good the omission," and I held out my card.

The two women exchanged a quick glance; then she who had been called Marie advanced a step and took the card from me. This she held out at arm's length, screwing up her eyes in the most grotesque manner.

"Give it to me," said Grey Eyes; "it's no use your pretending to read without glasses."

"My dear, how can you!" protested the other.

"You know perfectly well that I'm only tired."

"Of course you are, dear." But those radiant eyes were smiling all the time. "Mr. John Mordaunt," she continued, reading the card. "No, I do not think I know Mr. John Mordaunt."

"Pardon. That is scarcely a reason why you should not."

"But is it a reason why I should?"

"If I were anyone else, I should say I think it is. I am sure you will understand and appreciate the difficulty of a modest man having to blow his own trumpet."

"You do it with no ill grace, Monsieur."

"At all events, Madame, I approach you with respectful sincerity, and I beg of you not to think me presumptuous."

The eyes were smiling again, but not so quizzingly, I thought. There was humour, too, about the mouth, and a loveliness of which I was growing every moment more enamoured.

"Still," said the elderly lady, "this is most unusual, Monsieur; and I doubt if her—" Grey Eyes flashed a look on her, and she stammered a little suspiciously. "I doubt if we should sanction promiscuous acquaintance," she added lamely.

"Believe me, Madame, I am not unmindful of your consideration. It is wrong of me to force myself upon you, and I hasten to offer a most humble apology." With that I raised my hat and turned to go.

"Mr. Mordaunt!"

"Madame!"

"I am not in the least offended. Indeed I think you have been consideration itself. Only I am sure you will admit that our introduction was a little casual."

"May I hope that



I presented myself before them, hat in hand.

turned away. They disappeared in the direction of the Hermitage; I went off to my hotel and *déjeuner*.

That my scheme had resulted so disastrously caused me no little annoyance, for without doubt I was more than anxious to cultivate the acquaintance of that delightful woman. I had even dreamt with the ardour of a youth of twenty. It was all foolishness, of course. Again and again I repeated that fact to myself for fear I should forget it; and yet its repetition seemed but to confuse a possible issue. Not for an instant did I think of her as a lightly made acquaintance. Her manner was natural and unaffected, with just a suspicion of hauteur somewhere in the background. But I fancied annoyance would harden those grey eyes, anger curl that tantalising mouth to a contempt which I would rather not experience.

Phew! I tried to blow away the fancies with a whiff of my after-*déjeuner* cigarette. Was I to waste my life in dreams? "*Rien ne va plus*," the croupier had droned. Well, every game had to stop some time or other—even the Great Game of Life.

And yet I knew it was only the hope of seeing her again which drew me to the Casino that afternoon,

though as I walked from table to table I tried to tell myself that I wasn't looking for her at all, that I should pretend not to see her even if we met. After all, I was not a pariah; and who was she anyway, she and her old maid Marie? Strange I had never asked myself that question before. I suppose it was because from the first moment of my speaking to her she had impressed me with being what we call the "right thing." There is no mistaking it. It is a label which the right people always display to advantage.

That afternoon in the crowded rooms was one of the dearest I have ever spent in my life. I now know the reason, though then I was too angry to ask myself. But the gloom of the evening was relieved by a sudden flash of light. She passed with Marie and another woman, a couple of foreign-looking men following in her train. The flash of light was the smile she gave me. She looked wondrously handsome and happy, and though not over-dressed, was yet gowned superbly. I went out on the Terrace, ostensibly to smoke a cigarette in the open; but the moon was on the sea and the stars were twinkling in the infinite. And there and then the moon and the stars and I exchanged confidences.

On the following afternoon I found her at the tables. Indeed, she was sitting in the very seat she had occupied on the occasion of our first meeting.

For a little while I stood gazing at her, she being oblivious of my presence. One, two, three *coups* she lost with that same imperturbability which I ever associated with her, and I was just on the point of turning away when she looked up and our eyes met. Instantly recognising me, she smiled and bowed, and as at that moment the man at her side vacated his chair, she marked it and nodded for me to join her. I accepted the invitation with almost humorous avidity.

"Come and bring me good luck," she said.

"I can't touch a thing."

"Is it so bad as that?"

"Oh, so, so! Not that it really matters; only I hate being beaten."

"The unaccustomed surprises?"

"What makes you say that?"

"Only that I should think you had not grown accustomed to being beaten. It is really nothing when you are used to it." And I tried to look as though I knew all about it.

"Perhaps you were never wider of the mark," she replied. "But tell me, what's coming now?"

"I wish I could."

"Then you have lost those wonderful powers of prescience?"

"If I ever had them."

She pouted. "And I hoped you could help me."

"And I am conscious of requiring help."

She was sitting in front of number 16, but some contrary fate prevailed upon her to stake round 29. Sixteen came up.

"Did you notice that?"

"What?" she asked.

"Our fate is always in our lap, only some inscrutable destiny prevents our seeing it."

"Cryptic," she muttered, but she smiled and continued her game. Then her last two louis went in a vain attempt to stem adversity. She looked into her bag. There was not a coin left. "Not enough for a cup of tea," she added regretfully.

"Dare I offend a second time? Will you take tea with me?"

She hesitated, but only for a moment.

"I shall be delighted. Only let us get out of this. The atmosphere is intolerable."

I suggested the Café de Paris and she agreed. On the steps outside we met Madame Marie, who was hurrying into the Casino. Upon recognising me I was honoured with a frigid bow. However, that did not concern me greatly. I even had hopes of one day winning the confidence of this austere dame.

"Ah, there you are," cried my companion. "Mr. Mordaunt has kindly asked me to tea. I shall not play any more this afternoon."

"If Madame will also honour me?" I said. Marie looked uncertain, but Grey Eyes cut in with a laugh.

"Of course she will, won't you, Marie? We are just going over to the Paris." And as we crossed the square she confided to me that Marie's mission had been to gather more money; hence that lady's hurried mounting of the Casino steps.

It did me good to see the healthy way my guests attacked the tea and cakes. Madame Marie may have had certain scruples about promiscuous acquaintances, but decidedly she had none in dispatching cakes and tea. As for the divinity with the grey eyes, she was just the most charming young woman a man could ever hope to entertain; and my absurd dreams were beginning to come again when a snorting automobile drew up quivering before the entrance. I saw a rather stout, florid-faced individual descend and come slowly towards us. I thought he fixed his eyes on our party with a pertinacity which was almost offensive. Indeed, I was just giving him back his stare with interest when Madame Marie rose hurriedly to her feet exclaiming, "The Duke!"

The florid one advanced to our table and looked at us, an amused smile on his face.

"Hullo, Louise," he said carelessly; "giving the tables a rest for five minutes?"

"Mr. Mordaunt kindly asked us to tea," Grey Eyes answered.

"Oh! Do I know him?"

"Let me present you. Mr. Mordaunt, this is my husband, the Archduke Rudolf of Detmold-Meningen."

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Mordaunt," said the Archduke cordially.

"Thanks," I muttered; "awfully glad Will you have some tea?"

"Merci," he answered with a smile. "*Rien ne va plus*."

I looked at her. The phrase summed up the situation.

[THE END.]

FAIRY STORIES BY PHOTOGRAPHY: GRIMM ILLUSTRATED.



IN THE GLASS MOUNTAIN OF THE SEVEN RAVENS.

To a poor man who had seven sons was born a daughter so weakly that it was decided to baptise her at once, and her brothers were sent to fetch water. On their way they quarrelled and broke their pitcher, and so dared not return home. And their father, wearied of waiting for them, cursed them, saying: "I wish they were all ravens." On the instant his desire was fulfilled, and seven coal-black ravens flew over the house. Years passed, and the little girl grew in stature, in beauty, and in knowledge, and at last learned of the fate of her brothers. Then she set out to find them, and journeyed many days until she reached the glass mountain

in which they dwelt. In this she found a dwarf who asked her errand, invited her to await the ravens' return, and carried in the birds' dinner on seven little plates and in seven little cups. From each plate the little girl ate a crumb; from each glass she drank a little draught; into the last cup she let fall her ring. Then with a rush of wings the ravens entered, and the youngest, turning over his cup, found the ring. "Grant that our sister may be here," he said, "for then we shall be free." So, indeed, it happened, and the seven ravens became seven handsome youths.

SETTING BY "THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS"; PHOTOGRAPH OF MISS DOLLY DUMBEY BY BASSANO.



THE PRINCE FINDING THE SLEEPING BEAUTY.

At the christening of a great King's daughter twelve wise women were among the guests. Eleven of them endowed the child with a fairy gift, but before the twelfth could speak there entered a thirteenth, full of revenge because she had not been asked to the feast. "In her fifteenth year," she said, "the King's daughter shall prick her finger with a spindle and fall down dead." Then the twelfth spoke, saying that she could not undo the decree, but that she could soften it. "The King's daughter shall not die," she prophesied; "but a deep sleep shall fall upon her in which she shall remain for a hundred years." In course of time, the curse of the thirteenth wise woman came true. The Princess pricked her hand with a

spindle, and instantly fell asleep, as did all those around her. There sprang up, too, a hedge of thorns which encompassed the castle; and from that day grew the legend of the Sleeping Beauty. Many years passed, and a young Prince heard this story, and the hundred years had nearly come to an end. "I will see this beautiful Briar Rose," he boasted. And one day he reached the castle. As he did so the thorny hedge opened before him, and, passing through, he found the Sleeping Beauty. At a touch she opened her eyes and smiled upon him, and they went down together to the King and Queen, who had also awakened after their sleep of a hundred years, and plighted their troth one to another.

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SETTING BY "THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS"; PHOTOGRAPHS OF MISS GLADYS COOPER (THE PRINCE), MISS PAULINE CHASE (THE SLEEPING BEAUTY), AND THE MISSES DORIS COOPER, ANY WEBSTER, DOLLY DUMBEY, AND GLADYS ARCHBUTT (ATTENDANTS), BY BASSANO.



INTERRUPTED SPORT

BY WALTER F. GROGAN.
Illustrated by W. RUSSELL FLINT.

THE Rocket coach swung down the incline, rattled along the level, valiantly charged the succeeding hill, and about midway to its summit elapsed into groaning, creaking, whip-cracking effort. There was a distinct dimming of the light that filtered through the mud-splashed windows, so perceptible that it was doubtful which would reach the top of Breadington Hill first—night or the coach.

I pulled the collar of my coat more snugly about my throat, plunged my hands into my pockets, yawned, and ostentatiously disposed myself for sleep. My only companion in the inside of the coach was a little ferret man in a grey frieze ulster, who by jerking, sneezing, fidgeting, and grunting, had effectually baulked me of sleep since our last baiting-place. On the outside of the coach were four bagmen and two or three red-cheeked maids going into service, as I imagined.

I had compassed as near an approach to sleep as I had made for hours, when my companion jerked a remark at me in a high, grating voice.

"There's a gallows on the top of the hill."

"Indeed!" I made answer, tetchily enough.

"Breadington Heath is a famous place for highwaymen."

"Indeed," I said again.

"We're close to it now." The little ferret man dropped the window with a rattle, letting in the frosty December air with a rush. The coach lights gleamed on the hedges, the little prickles of frost glinting back at us. Twilight was quickly slipping into night. The team, urged by the driver, broke into a trot and triumphantly brought the Rocket to the crest of the hill.

Suddenly a shout came from the cross-road on our right, a girl screamed loudly from the coach-roof, and the team were pulled up all of a scramble.

A horseman rode into the light of the coach-lamps. From my seat I could see his riding-boots, and his horse's chest—black, with a white blaze. The rest of rider and horse was in shadow.

"Is that the Rocket coach?"

"Yes," said the driver.

"Have you a doctor with you?"

I pricked up my ears at that.

"I dunno," said the driver cautiously.

"We're bagmen," volunteered a voice from the top of the coach.

"See he don't go on, Jack," the horseman directed to a companion, who, I afterwards found, had pulled his horse right across the road and so brought the coach to a stop. Then he rode to our window.

"Are you a doctor, Sir?" he asked me, ignoring the little ferret man.

"A surgeon," I answered.

"Can you come with us?"

"I am on my way to Exeter," I replied. In truth, I did not care much to go journeying with two chance acquaintances at night and in an unknown country.

"It is an urgent case. There will be a fee of twenty guineas."

"If I refuse?" I suggested. It seemed to me that he was carrying matters with a high hand. This I gathered more from his tone and manner than his words.

"I should, with all courtesy, have to insist." He permitted the wind to throw open his cloak. I saw the handle of a pistol. I shrugged my shoulders.

"I am persuaded," I said. I had a fancy that the little ferret man smiled at the horseman. His remarks about the gallows and highwaymen flashed across my mind. Possibly he was in collusion with them. And yet what harm can befall a poverty-stricken surgeon at the hands of highwaymen? A man who has nothing to lose may risk his all with a light heart.

"I knew that you would be touched by our appeal," the horseman said gravely.

I alighted. The second horseman reined back. The driver whipped up his team, and the coach rumbled and creaked and clattered into the night.

"Is the way far?" I asked.

"Nothing—a flea-bite—a beggarly ten miles."

I gasped.

"Am I to walk ten miles?" I cried. "This is rough usage, on my soul!"

The second horseman rode a little way down the cross-road, and reappeared with a led horse, saddled and bridled.

"Mount!" commanded the first horseman; and as I threw myself into the saddle he added, "You ride, Sir?"

"I was surgeon in the —th Dragoons," I replied.

"I am now on my way to carve out a practice in Exeter, where I have some little influence."

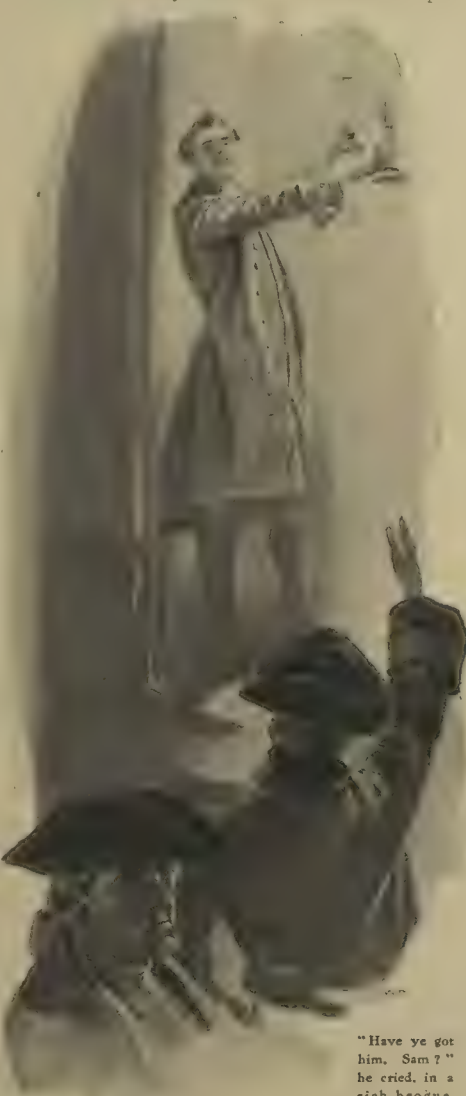
"H'm—a cavalry surgeon. So much the better," he commented.

Two more unsociable companions I have never met. For ten miles we floundered in the worst roads I have ever encountered. Yet, save for an occasional oath, they uttered no word. When the road admitted, they were on either side of me; when it narrowed, as more frequently it did, one rode ahead and the other dropped

behind. I plied them with questions, I jested, I inveighed against the roads, and I praised the horse I bestrode, in truth a brute of some mettle; but in no way could I shake either out of his taciturnity.

At length we came to a house of some pretensions through an avenue of fine trees which I took to be oaks. There were lights in many of the downstairs rooms winking out at us, but I could discover none above, so that I imagined the sick-room to be on the higher side. By this time I was calmed of my fears. Whatever my grim companions were, they were not highwaymen. The sight of so fine a house was also reassuring.

We made some clatter alighting, and before we could mount the steps the front door was thrown open.



"Have ye got him, Sam?" he cried, in a rich brogue.

Framed in the doorway was a young man, in puce coat and breeches, but wearing his own light hair unpowdered. In each hand he held aloft a massive silver candlestick. He was a little over six feet in height, and of a handsome, pleasing countenance.

"Have ye got him, Sam?" he cried, in a rich brogue. It was a rollicking voice, a voice to set you laughing, a voice that was full and round and seductive.

"Yes, Sir Phelim," the first horseman replied, whom I took to be a local squireen.

"Then to Lord Harry as soon as ye can! Ride loike the devil, Sam, both of ye! And give him the message I told ye of. And you, Sir, come right in," he added, addressing me for the first time. The others rode off at his request, and I entered the hall.

"Kick the door to, Sir, if conveyient to you. The night's cold. 'Twill be punch, eh? or buttered claret?" He stuck the candlesticks down on a black oak table in the hall with a bang that might have wakened the dead

or sent the living to eternal sleep. "Give it a name—and shure yourself, too, for divil a handle did Sam give you."

He threw open a door, and we were in a handsome card-room, brilliantly lighted. A footman was busied in one corner with a tray of glasses, but otherwise the room was empty.

"My name is Edward Weekes," I said.

"And mine's Phaylim O'Bourke, seventh baronet—there's an uncommon fatality in my family, for the title is no older than the Second James, and yet I'm the seventh. Here, lad," he broke off to shout at the footman, "bring me buttered claret!"

Sir Phelim settled himself near the roaring fire in an armchair, with a little table at his elbow, and motioned to me to draw up likewise. I confess that I was astounded at my reception. I had been stopped on a high road and brought across the worst country I ever encountered to, I was fully persuaded, a serious case. At least only a serious case could excuse the peremptory proceedings.

"But my patient, Sir Phelim?" I remonstrated.

"Your patient? Ah, he has no need of your help now, Mister Wakes. Draw up. D'ye play écarté?"

"Do you mean that he is dead?" I cried.

"I mane nothing of the sort. He is alive at present. Ye may prefer piquet?"

"But, Sir Phelim, if he is alive it would be well for me to see him at once. I gathered by the urgency of my summons that it was a serious case."

He stretched out his long legs to the fire, cast his eyes up to the ceiling, and sighed.

"Oh, it's sayrious enough, Mister Wakes."

"What is the matter—who is he?" I demanded.

The man's manner annoyed me. If his affection was as much engaged as his sigh suggested he should at least show more practical concern about the patient.

"The matter," Sir Phelim answered indolently, "is an affection of the heart with complications. And plague take me if I can tell ye who he is."

"Is he a stranger to you?"

"The best or the nearest friend I have. But he won't be ill until to-morrow morning. An' if ye hadn't been travelling by the Rocket belike he'd have been a well man for twenty-four hours longer. Ah, here's the buttered claret. Set it down, lad. Mister Wakes, a toast? Mistress Doreen!"

"But—" said I.

"Drink, Sir! I'll not have her name disregarded. And, faith, but for her ye wouldn't be here at all, so ye owe her something." He cocked his eye whimsically. "And I should say ye were not over-squeamish as to an excuse for a bumper."

I drank the toast as he requested, and, piqued by curiosity, drew a chair to the fire, as Sir Phelim suggested. Indeed, to humour my strange host seemed the only way by which to come to some understanding of the situation.

"Shure, that's better," Sir Phelim was pleased to smile at me very pleasantly. "Talking is dry work."

"Sir Phelim, I do not understand you," I said.

"There is no occasion ye should."

"And I understand less about my patient."

"Ah, well, it's not the patient ye should understand, but the disayse. Have ye had much expayrience?"

"The heart, of course, is easy—" I commenced.

"There ye're wrong; it's mighty onaisy."

"I have been surgeon to the —th Dragoons," I continued.

"Then ye're the boy for me!" he exclaimed.

"For you? For your friend?"

"One or other of us."

"My patient—" I commenced.

"May be Phaylim O'Bourke," he said easily.

I sat up in my chair and gasped at him.

"It's a duel!" I cried.

"Just that! Sam Tirebrush and Jack Spendell have ridden over to Lord Harry Wimper to acquaint him of the fact of your prisence. Ye see, we've quarrelled with all the neighbouring Sawbones—a tetchy lot, Sir—and so were constrained to get Slim Abe to ride a stage with the Rocket every day for a wake. When he came across a doctor he was to let down the window with a rattle on coming to Breadington Hill. Sam and Jack waited there. Plaguey bad weather it's been, too."

"Then the little ferret man in the grey frieze—"

"Was Slim Abe—and, by the same token, a little of your way, being a horse-doctor. Here's another toast—Lord Harry Wimper, my greatest friend!"

His face lit up with an affectionate smile as he spoke.

"He is the man you are to meet?" I inquired.

"To-morrow morning! A lovable man, Mr. Wakes. We've been loike brothers for years."

"And yet you are to meet him!" I cried in amazement.

"Why not? It's a consolation to go out at the

hand of a friend. A pretty shot, Sir—a pretty shot! If he does the trick, he'll make a clane job of it."

"And what is the cause of your quarrel?"

Sir Phelim started up.
"Quarrel! I've no quarrel with Harry. Lud, Sir, I love him as my soul!"

"But to-morrow?"

"That is a friendly arrangement. One of us is superfluous. We're both sorry 'tis so, but there it is. Whin love plays on your heart-strings as though 'twere a fiddle, zounds, ye've got to jig to his tune!" He sighed and looked up at the ceiling again, drank another bumper bravely, and eyed a pack of cards longingly. "Did ye play *écarté*, Sir?" he asked, cutting the cards idly.

"You want me to attend the duel, Sir Phelim?" I inquired.

"Shure, that's the idea. 'Twill be a sarvice to us and not much labour to ye, for we're both excellent with the barkers. There's a fay of twenty guineas. It's handsome, but I niver pay less."

"If I refuse?"

"Then, bedad, I'd say I was mistaken in taking ye for a gentleman, and ye'd have to attend in another capacity! No, no, Mister Wakes, I can tell ye've the sowl of a gentleman in your lane body, and will be happy to do us a sarvice."

He continued to finger the cards, and every time he met my eye he smiled and lifted his eyebrows inquiringly.

"So love is at the root of the matter?"

"Isn't it so always? I've been out ten toimes, and only once was I not in love, and then I didn't know it. Ye're curious, Mister Wakes, and if ye won't play—*écarté* is an illigant game—I'll let ye know how it stands. Then your mind being aisy as to that, perhaps a hand would kape us awake till Sam returns?"

I bowed.

"Mistress Doreen, only daughter of ould Squire Fewlass, is the most beautiful crature I've iver seen. Her eyes are as blue as heaven, her hair's loike burnished gold, and puts the sun to the blush. But I can't describ' her—a hundred poets would tear their hair and their paper if they tried. Harry agreed with me, we saw her at the same toime being together, and we both broke into praise of her. If he had been unmoved we could no longer have been friends, for I would call no man friend who was so insensate a clod as not to love her. There, Sir, ye have it in a nutshell. We were both in love with her, madly as her beauty deserves. 'Harry,' says I, 'you spake first.' 'Phaylim,' he answered, 'I cannot consent to be outdone in generosity. The first word is yours.' Ye see how it was? Neither of us would give way. So what more natural than to decide in a gentlemanly manner? Besides the one who is hit will not have the pain of seeing his mistress wooed by another. If he's killed there is an end, and if he's only winged Mistress Doreen will be married by the time he is well."

"But why not allow Mistress Doreen a choice?" I suggested. The whole matter struck me as being too hare-brained for serious contemplation. Yet Sir Phelim spoke earnestly and gravely.

"What! put such an onerous decision on a slip of a girl! Egad, no!"

"But has she shown no preference?"

"Lud, Mister Wakes, she is a monument of propriety. Would she be after showing preference to any man with whom she had had no spache?"

"You have not spoken to her!" I cried. This young, handsome debonaire giant amazed me more and more.

"Not yet. It will be a clear morning with very little wind to-morrow. I am afraid Harry has a slender chance. If I wing him I shall call upon her the same day." He gazed thoughtfully into the fire. "I may be near a very great happiness, Sir."

"But, egad, Sir Phelim, she may be enamoured of someone else!"

"It may be as you suggest," he assented.

"But there are few who are my match with a duelling-pistol. The only rival I need fear is my dearest friend. If I wing him I shall grieve," he continued, with such a sorrowful tone that I could not doubt his sincerity. "This is playney melancholy talk, Sir. Do you prefer piquet?"

We sat to *écarté*, and my companion regained his cheerfulness. He drank steadily, ringing twice for the footman to bring a fresh supply of buttered claret, but his potations in no way affected him. I was moderate, at which he rallied me.

"Whatever ye drink ye'll be sober enough for your work in the morning. As for me, I shoot straighter if I do not depart from my usual custom," he said.

Curiously enough, I found him an indifferent player, and won steadily. At this he was considerably elated.

"A happy omen!" he declared. "Unlucky at cards, ye know the saying. Poor Harry! I have almost a mind to put off the meeting—'tis like taking an advantage of him, being so unlucky as this. Ye ought to have made the stakes higher, Mister Wakes." I had pleaded a poor surgeon's purse as an excuse for keeping the play low. "Ye'll hardly double your fay, with all your luck."

Near midnight there was a clattering outside, and the next moment my two taciturn friends entered. Sir Phelim turned to them eagerly—

"Did ye settle the place?" he cried.

"The Lone Oak Meadow," was the reply.

"Pretty enough," he mused. "A trifle near the high road may be, but at such an early hour we are not like to be distur-b'd. How was Harry?"

"We found him at piquet with a guardsman. He was unlucky, and hearing our news, declared he was uneasy concerning you, bearing in mind the saying about bad luck at cards and love."

"Sir," Sir Phelim cried, looking towards me, "is he not a friend of whom one may be proud? Egad, my heart warms to him. We'll toast him in a bumper!"

This proposition was carried through, and then Sir Phelim and his two friends fell to discussing the coming morning's event. This they did in a cool, business-like manner, with many side references to similar events. Mr. Tirebrush was, as I surmised, a squireen of the neighbourhood, and Mr. Spendell I discovered to be the son of a retired Major, too poor to put him into his Majesty's service, and too proud to allow of his working honestly at some trade.

At one o'clock I requested leave to retire, and Mr. Spendell was sent to show me to my room. Sir Phelim excusing himself on the ground of being engaged at *carté* with Mr. Tirebrush, "and lucky enough to be losing handsomely, Mister Wakes. Slape well—if ye feel at all disturbed ye'll find a bottle or two of claret under the bed."

I tried to engage Mr. Spendell in conversation, but found him nearly as taciturn as he was during our ride hither. He lighted me to my room, and then went to the window, which he pushed open, leaning out. The air rushing in was excessively cold, so I bade him close it, which he did civilly enough.

"There's very little wind and not a

cloud the width of a ray

showing. 'Twas a

night like this before

the morn Sir

Phelim went

out with



A young man had scrambled out of the chaise, and was helping a young woman to alight.

fatigued, I fell asleep. I was awakened early after cock-crow by the discharge of a pistol under my window. I leapt out of bed, thrust open the casement, and peered out.

"It's toime ye were up, Mister Wakes," came the voice of Sir Phelim. "We move in half-an-hour. I'm having a few minutes' practice, and ye'll find breakfast in the dining-room. It's a glorious day: not a breath of wind and not a cloud."

We were first on the ground—a level meadow with one side resting on a high road. It was extremely cold weather, and, waiting for Lord Harry, we were put to it to walk sharply to keep up our circulation.

Presently a tilbury spun down the road, and a few minutes afterwards Sir Phelim was greeting with extreme cordiality a little fat man, about forty years of age, who came towards us, accompanied by two military-looking men.

"Mister Wakes, let me introjue ye to my dearest friend, Lord Harry Wimster!" cried Sir Phelim. "He's a surgeon, Harry," the young Irishman explained. Lord Harry was a pleasant-looking man, good-nature beamed out of humorous grey eyes, and good-fellowship lurked in his rich, somewhat thick voice.

"I hope we shall not inconvenience you, Mister Weekes," he said, courteously enough. "With so good a light, we ought to shoot straight."

"But is there any necessity—?" I commenced.

"Not a word!" cried Lord Harry. Sir Phelim turning to greet the officers, Lord Harry caught me by the arm and walked me aside. "It is Phelim's day—just the light and no wind. I wouldn't disappoint him for worlds. You know the cause?"

"It appears inadequate!"

"I really see no other way out of it. It is inconvenient, but we could neither help it. Love complicates life very much."

"Mistress Fewlass may already prefer someone else," I expostulated. "I believe neither of you has spoken to her."

"We are, I trust, Mr. Weekes, both honourable men, and such was the arrangement. Ah, I see they have settled the ground." He waddled over to his seconds and divested himself of his coats, hat, and cravat, whistling joyously the while. Sir Phelim, likewise uncoated, fronted him. The seconds measured the ground and placed them.

"One moment, Colonel!" cried Sir Phelim. "The rising sun being a little to Harry's back gives me a sharper outline."

Lord Harry Wimster laughed as he allowed himself to be moved.

"Egad!" he said, "it's the first time for years that my outline has been sharp!"

"Are you ready, gentlemen?" the Colonel inquired.

"Then, one, two—"

"Stop!" cried Mr. Tirebrush. "There's a post-chaise coming down the hill. Its movement may disturb Sir Phelim's aim."

We turned from our serious business to watch.

The postchaise came down the rutty hill at a monstrous speed. The postboy was plying whip as though riding for life, and the chaise swayed in an alarming manner.

"They'll be over in a moment!" cried Sir Phelim.

"Lud, Harry, a guinea to a chiney orange it's a runaway match!"

"Not a doubt of it," assented Lord Harry.

"Egad," 'twould be a fine thing to give them a cheer!" At this suggestion, and with the chaise nearing us so rapidly, we all broke into a run towards the gate that gave on to the road, Lord Harry and Sir Phelim in their waistcoats, bare-headed, and holding the duelling-pistols in their hands.

"The boy's drunk or a fool!" cried the Colonel, as the vehicle lurched from one side of the road to the other. Then, running as we were, the chaise was hidden by the hedge.

We had but got to the gate, and Mr. Tirebrush commenced to unfasten it, when we heard the shrill cry of a woman, a loud oath from the postboy, a scrambling sound as though a horse had lost its footing, and then a horrible thud. With a wrench Mr. Tirebrush had the gate open, and we trooped out pell mell into the road. Not a score of yards beyond was the chaise with one wheel bent but still standing, the postboy in the ditch, and two maddened horses fighting and kicking to regain their feet.

"Mister Wakes, look to the boy!" cried Sir Phelim, and dashed forward to the horses' heads, followed by Lord Harry Wimster. When I had convinced myself that the boy was more frightened than hurt, and turned to the chaise, one horse was on its feet much bloodied, and Sir Phelim had the mouth of his pistol behind the other's ear as he lay writhing on the ground. A young man had scrambled out of the chaise, and was helping a young woman to alight. As charming a face looked out of the close-fitting travelling-bonnet as ever any I have seen.

The report of Sir Phelim's pistol made her scream, and in a moment he, still holding his smoking weapon, was round to her side with Lord Harry, the both of whom bowed most ceremoniously.

"Mistress Doreen Fewlass!" they both exclaimed, as looking up from their profound bow, they caught sight of her face.

She stared at them, and then burst into a laugh that rang out like chimes on the frosty air.

"Gentlemen, do you find the morning over hot?" she asked.

Suddenly aware of their lack of costume, both men were confused. Lord Harry crimsoned all over his round face, and Sir Phelim murmured something about sport.

"Zounds!" cried the young man, "we are in a sorry way! You see us in the act of eloping, gentlemen. Even now Squire Fewlass may be in pursuit. I have relays upon the road, but as you see, it is impossible to proceed from here with a buckled wheel and a dead horse."

At which rough statement of affairs Mistress Fewlass sobbed into a wee bit of gossamer.

Lord Harry looked at Sir Phelim, and Sir Phelim looked at Lord Harry. Then they linked arms and retired a few paces from us. In a minute they were back again.

"Sir," said Lord Harry, bowing to the young man, "can you drive?"

"Anything that will go in harness."

"In the field is a tilbury. It belongs to me. If you will do me the honour to use it as your own I shall be vastly obliged."

In five minutes we stood clustered round the open gate, Sir Phelim and Lord Harry hatted and coated, and cheered the tilbury as we had intended to cheer the chaise. Mistress Fewlass looked back and kissed her hands to us.

"Gentlemen," said Sir Phelim, "circumstances have settled our dispute. Harry, your hand."

"Phelim, my dear friend!" answered Lord Harry, beaming all over his good-natured face. "All's well that ends well—but, egad, 'twas just your day!" [THE END.]

IN THE SPACIOUS DAYS OF QUEEN BESS.

DRAWN BY R. CATON WOODVILLE.



PROCLAIMING A CHRISTMAS FAIR IN THE TIME OF QUEEN ELIZABETH.

CHRISTMAS EVE IN THE HAUNTED CHAMBER.

DRAWN BY J. R. SKELTON.



GETTING READY FOR CHRISTMAS: THE GHOSTS' TOILETTE.

FORSAKEN MOUNTAIN

By SAMUEL H. ADAMS

Illustrated by Arthur H. Bockland.

A stone s-throw cut on either hand
From that well-ordered road we tread,
And all the world is wild and strange . . .
For we have reached the Oldest Land,
Wherein the Powers of Darkness range.

—In the House of Suddhao.

SNOW, snow, snow. Steadily, pitilessly it had come down for a week. Not a train had run through to cheer our isolation. We hung to the warm, full-blooded world only by the slim nerve of the telegraph wire that stretched invisibly into the distances; Wayne and I; and to us there clung, avidly and desperately, by another reach of the metal thread, two more isolated than we. For around us cowered the little hamlet of Garrawold, while Mowbray and Jackson of the Government Survey's outpost on Forsaken Mountain reckoned us their nearest neighbours, and we were thirty-two miles across the frozen Montana highlands from the station where they had wearied through the winter in two-man loneliness.

The whiteness and silence had got on our nerves. And if it was hard on us, judge how much worse it was for that pair, winter-marooned as they were. Little enough chance did they give us to forget it. The wire kept hot and tingling with their irritation and complaints. Most often it was the crisp, staccato telegraphy of Mowbray, who was an expert operator.

"Coming down harder and faster than ever. Did you ever see such a curse of weather!" Then he would ramble off into speculations on the genealogy of the weather man.

Next, Jackson, the assistant, would take hold and send his less practised Morse stumbling along the wire. Queries were his way, mostly. "Clearing any down in your direction?" or "Get any weather news from East!" or, maybe a half-pitiful hope: "Can't be much more left, can there?"

One or the other of them was at it half the time, particularly in the evenings. It was all they had to do, you see, and strict attention to a telegraph-wire will sometimes keep a man from seeing and hearing things that aren't there. If you've ever spent weeks in a cut-off world keeping two-man watch, you'll know what I mean.

One noon, when Jackson had finished filtering out the morning's news—it concerned itself with his failure to shoot a storm-strayed bird with Mowbray's revolver, for they needed fresh meat—Wayne turned to me and opened a new line of inquiry.

"What kind of a duck do you figure this Jackson to be?"

We knew Mowbray pretty well, but neither of us had ever seen his companion. He had come to his post from somewhere West, dropping off a way-train on the further slope of the mountains, and since then the snow hadn't given him much chance to make any visits. So our acquaintance was wholly by wire.

"By his Morse he's a tenderfoot," I said, with the scorn of the newly adept for the amateur. "His o's are all broken up into double-e's, and his l's are so long that—"

"Don't I know that?" broke in Wayne. "What do you figure him to look and be? That's what I'm asking you."

"Well, that stutter of his on the wire means he's nervous. His touch is heavy; he's variable and uncertain, and he gets rattled if you break in. I seem to see a big, sloppy-built, sort of sour-faced chap who maybe mightn't be quite all there if you wanted him at a pinch. Probably I'm way off, but there's something queer about his tick-talk. Something besides inefficiency I mean."

"Think so?" said Wayne, looking at me hard. "I reckon perhaps you're right. From what I once heard he's a queer lot. It wasn't very definite, but there were drugs in it."

"Pleasant chum for a nervous bo' like Mowbray." "I'm for going up there to take a look if this old bliz ever breaks," remarked Wayne. "Someway there's something about the messages I don't just favour. Just a little smell of some trouble I don't quite savvy."

It was the eighth day, I think, of uninterrupted snow-fall—a Sunday morning—when the trouble began to take shape. Jackson called up early, and his introductory, "M-Q; M-Q; M-Q" was more pattering than usual.

"I'm sick," he ticked out painfully. "My head's all hot and wrong. My eyes ain't good, either." Then

and began to tick off the seconds like a trip-hammer. One minute—two minutes—three minutes; and I pictured at the other end of the slender steel wire two men tight-locked, who gripped at the living breath in each other's throats. I jumped as if shot when the wire resumed.

"Just went for me again. I had to hit him with the gun. Now he's sitting in his chair crying, and saying that he knew I wanted to murder him. What will I do? What will I do?"

Wayne went back at him with one word. "Crazy?" "Delirium, I reckon. Pretty high fever and his eyes are wild. He's got some stuff he says is medicine, and he takes it pretty steady. I can't get him to bed. He sits there across from me with his elbows on the table and his chin in his fists and just stares at me." So far the message had run clean. Now there was a sudden, startling splutter to the wire. "My God, boys, I can't stand this long! Can't you get a party through some way?"

Wayne and I looked at each other and then out into the wild blur of snow. "We'd be lost, ten rods from the shack," said I.

"No need to tell me that," said Wayne, and he wired: "Start as soon as ever we can. Old Man Winter has sat right down on the track, but I don't reckon he can keep set much longer without getting cramps. Give us a little leeway and we'll be there."

"That's all right, and thanks," Mowbray had control of himself again. "I knew it would be sure death to tackle the trip while she's coming down like this. If I can keep awake, we'll pull through O.K."

"Keep awake? What for? Better get some sleep."

"With him sitting there? What mightn't he do to himself—or me?"

"Well, keep us wise. We'll want to know how you come along."

"All right." Then, hesitatingly, "You wouldn't mind if I should call you up, maybe, in the night?" There was a long pause, and—"I'm frightened."

"Poor devil! Poor devil!" half-whispered Wayne. Striding over to the window, he stared vindictively into the white maelstrom. It only came down the swifter, so it seemed.

That evening we got our last message from the living Jackson.

"Help, help, help, help, help!"

That was all—those five stumbling, long-d-d, piteous appeals. Before we could make any move, Mowbray supplemented the message.

"He's worse. Been muttering and prowling all evening. Got to the wire while I was after water. Now he's back in his place with his chin in his fists, staring at me again." The wire

birred for a moment as if the hand at the key had been convulsed by a chill. "He's a devil from hell," it chattered.

Wayne and I looked at each another, aghast. "Mowbray too!" he said. "He's going the same way!"

I got to the instrument. "Steady, steady, old man!" I sent. "Get on to yourself. Remember he's a sick man. It's up to you to take care of him."

"Right." The response came a little more calmly, though the style was still strained and unnatural. "I won't let his eyes phase me again. But they're red and fiery inside."

"Bad business," commented Wayne hoarsely. In the middle of the night I heard the same remark from his bunk. I wondered what his picture of the shack on Forsaken Mountain might be. From the fact that he hadn't been asleep, I judged it might be a twin to mine.



Right in the midst of the word it broke off.

the hopeless question, grown sorrowful by iteration; "No signs of clearing yet, I suppose?"

"Nothing yet," I answered him. "Cheer up, old man. Better go to bed and have Mowbray give you a dose of whisky."

The answer gave me a jolt. "Mowbray can't touch me. I'm on to him. I don't want to die just yet."

"Let me have the wire," cried Wayne, and as I relinquished the button to him he sent a call for Mowbray, which presently got a reply. Wayne sent a brief query.

"Yes; Jackson's 'way off,' came back in Mowbray's nervous, clean-cut Morse. "Went off his head yesterday evening, and came for me with a chair. Had hard work standing him off. This morning he's been muttering about showing me up to you fellows, bu—"

Right in the midst of the word it broke off. Wayne and I came to our feet and stared at each other. The clock on the end wall put on extra pressure immediately,

Monday morning came with a rise of wind. That was hopeful; any change was hopeful. I wired this to Mowbray, but got no response. Nor to anything else. How bitter long that morning was! Not a tick could we get from the men on the mountain, though both of us tried, time and again. Then at three p.m. the wire went crazy.

"M-Q; M-Q; M-Q," over and over again. Just our plain call, but oh, the sound of it!

Something there is in the electric current that carries not only the words but the spirit of the sender. Every operator knows this. Once I heard a message from a poor devil of a railroad dispatcher shot through the lungs, and each separate letter was like a throb of agony. Now, in the panic haste of Mowbray's call, I caught the note of a freezing, frenzied terror. To throw open the switch and answer was the work of a second, but when I closed for the message the call continued until my frazzled nerves rang with it. Wayne, who had been outside, came in at the leap.

"Who's that?" he exclaimed. "It ain't—yes, it is Mowbray. But what in Heaven's name is the matter with him!"

I threw up a hand. "Hush! It's coming." It came. How it rattled from the sounder, words fleeing in huddled fear from their own meaning!

"He's dead. Dead, I tell you. He sits there with his elbows on the table and his chin on his fists, staring at me. He don't speak. He don't move. He don't breathe. He's dead and his eyes are open and they burn like fire." *M-Q; M-Q; M-Q; M-Q.* "Can't you answer? For the love of pitying Heaven, come and get me!" The wire wailed and clacked into silence like a sick man's weeping.

My fingers slipped from the key, cramped and nerveless.

"You do it," I said to Wayne. "I can't."

As he ticked off his message his hand shook so that I should never have recognised the work.

"Pull yourself together, old man," he wired. "We'll stick by you. We're right here. Keep up your nerve. Perhaps he isn't dead. If he was he couldn't hold his head up. He's only unconscious."

"No—no—no." The words fairly sprang from the sounder. "He's dead. He's waiting for me to touch him. Then he'll grab me with those stiff arms of his and drag me down to hell with him."

"Now, Mowbray. Now, old fellow," soothed Wayne. "Don't you go getting notions. You just shut your eyes so you can't see him, and stick to the key while I talk to you."

As he rattled it out he whirled on me and fiercely whispered—whispered, mind you, for fear he'd be heard by that poor, haunted creature thirty miles away and more—"Quick! Tell me what to say to him."

What it was I told him, what it was he put on the wire, I have mercifully forgotten.

In the knowledge that we were fighting for a friend's reason against a horror that I dared not picture, my brain went blank, and I think I babbled. Soon Mowbray began again.

"Dead—dead—dead. I saw him die. He cursed me and said, 'Mowbray, I won't go alone.' Then there was a click in his throat and the life went out. All but his eyes. They're burning me now. May the God of all the Devils— and the message tailed off into horrible, vacuous blasphemies.

All that afternoon we two, spell and spell, toiled and sweated over the wire pouring out our feeble encouragements. From time to time we would get a reply; always the same reply.

"He died cursing me. 'I'll not go alone, Mowbray.' That's what he said. Lord of pity! what had I ever done? What had I ever done?"

It was a message of Wayne's that for a moment got him on another trail.

"I can't think; can't, I tell you," he replied to Wayne's plea. "I can't pray, either. I tried. If only I had a Bible." Then—"That's what he said, just before he died. 'I'll not go alone.'"

Wayne cut off. "Get out your Bible!" he shouted at me. "Not get any?" He cursed savagely. "Hustle for one, then. Try Stack's wife. Women usually—"

Before he got any further I was out of the door. When I returned, it was with a frayed old King James, and the only three able-bodied grown men in the settlement. For three hours thereafter four grey-faced creatures pored over the Book of Comfort copying out texts for a fifth man to translate into code and put on the wire. Of us five in that room Jim Harting was an outlaw and murderer; Rustler Cobb, a braggart atheist; Michaels, a stranded bar-keep; while Wayne and I—well, we weren't exactly church members. But it was no time for fine distinctions. All that could

be heard above the ticking of the instrument was, "How'll this do? 'Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.' Or this ought to hit him: 'Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness,'" and then the soft shuffle of a pencil. "I'll bet there hasn't been that much Holy Writ on a wire since old War Correspondent Forbes held the line all night with the book of Genesis."

It was near nine o'clock when we got the first encouragement. Wayne's face brightened. "He's sent a repeat call for that," he said. Again he gave Mowbray the passage—"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in him will I trust. . . . Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. . . . For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

"That means something," came Mowbray's answer. "There's light and hope there." Once more, and very slowly, Wayne gave it to him. Have you any notion how solemn dots and dashes can sound? I give you my word, that promise, as Wayne sent it in the code, was like soft music in a cathedral. Michaels, the bar-keep, cried. He doesn't know whether three dots mean the letter "s" or Johnny-get-your-gun, but he cried like a baby.

head touched the pillow. Any length of time it might have been—as a matter of fact, it was only four hours later—when I came broad awake at a jump. The wire did it.

"M-Q; M-Q; M-Q." It was Mowbray all right, but another Mowbray from the sender of the night's wild messages. Wayne was already stumbling toward the big room.

"Sounds better and more reasonable," I called to him.

But his sense of wire-talk was keener than mine. "Don't like it," he growled. "Don't like it for a cent. All the vitality is out of that touch. Sounds like a— He checked himself, and amended: "Something's 'way wrong."

By this time he had reached the table. He acknowledged the call, and the message came very steady and deliberate.

"Jackson has come back."

Nothing more. Just that simple, appalling statement.

Wayne lifted his head and grinned vacantly. "What did he say?" he asked in a sick, thick sort of voice. I tried to repeat it. There was no need. The wire did it for me.

"Jackson has come back."

The grin died out of Wayne's face, but I began to laugh. I laughed out of the window because there was more air to laugh in. After Wayne had rubbed some snow into my neck hard, I began to cry.

"That'll do you!" he cried furiously. He sprang at the button again and worked it with a fury that

threatened to shatter the instrument. He might as effectively have drummed on the table so far as getting any reply was concerned.

That was a long day, Tuesday, March 11. If we sent the B-R call once we sent it five hundred times. Between two spells of calling, about five o'clock that afternoon Mowbray opened up.

"Oh-h-h!" groaned Wayne. "Listen to that style. I hate to take it."

Lifeless, dull, flaccid, like the voice of a man spent with long illness—that was Mowbray's wire-talk. Yet it ran smooth enough, and sensible enough taken word by word. It began without any signal call whatever. "He's come back and he sits opposite me with his elbows on the table and his chin in his fists, staring at me. He's dead. I buried him. But he's come back. You remember what he said. 'I'll not go alone.' That's what he said. Then he died. Just a little click in his throat and he died. Jackson died. But he's come back."

Into the pause I rushed with a wild appeal. The answer came quite coolly.

"Yes; I take you all right. I'm not insane. You don't understand. How could you? If it's an hallucination it's a strange one, for I've touched it and it's cold."

That sent me to the open again for more air. Wayne took the key.

"Just hang on, Mowbray. We start to-morrow morning. Weather Bureau reports warm spell due." This was a straight-cut lie. As if in derision of it a furious gust clutched and shook the building until its bones rattled. Moreover, the gale of the night before had cut us off from the east. The wire to Forsaken Mountain was now the only one left.

As a heartener Wayne's proffer was a dead failure, anyway.

"Not the slightest use," Mowbray sent back in his deadened, sodden Morse. "I'm a doomed man. All I want is not to go with Jackson. I must get him buried. Snow isn't enough to keep him down. I'll have to thaw the ground and give him a real grave in earth."

"It'll take him till midnight to build a fire and thaw the ground—enough to make any kind of grave," muttered Wayne. "We'll get nothing further till he's finished. Let the boys watch, and we'll turn in." For our three friends had volunteered to relieve us.

At one a.m. they called us to get Mowbray's message. Brief enough it was. He had interred Jackson and hoped for peace.

"Or death," he added simply. He was to go to bed, and advised us to do the same. You would have thought that we were the suffering ones and he the kindly adviser; but his calmness, we well knew, was the calmness of despair. Sending the watchers home, we turned in, one of us, at least, with a hateful and certain foreboding of what was to come on the morrow. But there was much between us and morning-light.

At three o'clock I awoke suddenly with a strong sense of summons. It was the identical feeling I had experienced when dozing in my chair the night before, but much intensified. In the same mysterious way it

(Continued on page 38.)



For three hours thereafter four grey-faced creatures pored over the Book of Comfort.



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connected itself with the telegraph instrument. I leaned out of my bunk, and heard Wayne stir.

"What's the matter, Sid?" he asked. "Hear something?"

"I don't know that I exactly *heard* anything," I replied. "I just sort of felt a call. Nerves, I reckon."

"Had 'em myself, then, a few minutes back," he said. "The ticker?"

"Yes."

"That's queer. I could have sworn —"

It cut him off sharp as a blow on the mouth. Both of us leaped out and rushed to the instrument. For it was softly, faintly fluttering. Yet I knew, with all the deadly certainty of terror, that it was not Mowbray. And every other wire was down! The instrument stammered and choked into silence.

"It's trying to say something—trying so hard," whispered Wayne pityingly. He spoke as of a suffering creature. His hand went out; I believe it was to fondle the instrument, but it sharply burred once and was still. Had it tried to tell us the dread secret hidden in that room on Forsaken Mountain?

Daylight found us still close to the wire, but there had been no other attempt. At eight o'clock I fell asleep in my chair. Nine o'clock came; ten, eleven, and still no word from Mowbray. Was this a good omen or an evil? With that imperative call still tugging at my spirit's sleeve, I could believe nothing but the worst. To call Mowbray we would not venture; the sound might wake him from a sleep that was refreshing his reason. But at noon he took the wire himself.

"Jackson has come back."

The same dread message in the same dreadful, lifeless Morse. This time it was the less shock, in that we both expected it, though it would have been hard to say why. Wayne turned from the table with what was well intended for a curse. But I think it was a sob.

"He means what he said," went on Mowbray. "He cursed me before he died. I'll not go alone, Mowbray." That's what he said, and now he's sitting there opposite, with his elbows on the table and his chin in his fists, staring at me. I found him when I got up this morning, and I've been sitting it out with him ever since. It's no use. He can't tell me what he wants. His lips are frozen. He longs to speak but he can't. But I know. 'I'll not go alone, Mowbray,' he said. And his eyes burn like fire. I must think; I must go outside and lie down and think."

"He'll freeze if he does," I gasped.

"It's an easy death," returned Wayne grimly. "Jackson'll not go alone."

"Stop it, damn you!" I shouted, and Wayne snarled back at me—

"Well, ain't it been enough to drive anyone nutty?"

Mowbray was not to go by the easy path of freezing. His nerveless touch on the key, some two hours later, roused us from the apathy into which we had fallen. "I have made up my mind," ran the dull, even ticks. "He has come back after me. 'I'll not go alone, Mowbray.' That's what he said. So, he's come to get me. I must bury him all over; and when he comes back I must bury him again and again and again. But sooner or later he'll find me asleep, and then—" The sounder paused. For the ending we were left to our own imaginings. It continued: "I want a prayer to say over his grave. I forgot it before. Perhaps that's why he won't let me rest. Send me a prayer for the dead."

We filled the wire with supplications, begging Mowbray to keep his mind fixed on our messages, and forget Jackson. But we could get only one reply: "Send me a prayer for the dead. I must have it within three hours."

At three o'clock we sent him all that our combined memories could recall of the Burial Service, beginning, "I am the resurrection and the life." It must have been a pitiable travesty, but Mowbray answered with, "Thank you, and God bless you." We expected nothing more that day, but at ten o'clock we got this for a good-night:

"I've buried him deeper than before, and said a prayer for both of us."

When we turned in, my heart was sick with a presentiment that, somehow, seemed to relate not so much to poor Mowbray as to Jackson. I realised what it was when, at three o'clock that morning, I awoke to hear the weird flutter of the ticker and to see Wayne hurrying out into the big room. In a few steps I was beside him.

"The wire is finding its voice," he said. "Listen. Oh, listen!"

"M-Q; M-Q; M-Q." It was very faint, but quite readable.

"Do you recognise it?" whispered Wayne.

"M-Q; M-Q; M-Q." It grew more distinct. I tried to find my voice, which seemed to have encountered an obstruction half-way up my throat.

"Don't you know who that is?" insisted Wayne. "Could you ever mistake that stammer in the dash?"

My voice broke through the blockade with a sudden clamour. "No, no, no! It *isn't* him! I won't believe it!"

"Jackson it is," said Wayne coolly. I marvelled afterward that the words didn't strangle him. "Take the wire while I get something."

Lighting the lamp he brought from his locker the bottle of brandy kept there for emergencies. "I've a notion we may need it," he explained grimly.

"M-Q; M-Q; M-Q." Loud and clear, now; there was no mistaking that hesitant, nervous touch. Yet there was something unlike, too—something that stabbed my heart like a fanged poison. I threw the switch open. It may have been my imagination, but it seemed

agony. It seemed to come not so much from the wire as from the whole unseen world of terrors that enfolded us; the dim, horror-saturated atmosphere thrilled and throbbed in its every particle to Jackson's slow-fluttering invocation.

"For—God's—pity—let—me—rest. For—God's—dear—love—let—me—lie—quiet. In—the—name—of—the—pitiful—Father—bring—me—peace—and—unbroken—sleep."

For all my unmanly fears, for all the freezing agony that gripped my heart, I could have wept with the pure pity of it. A strangled cry from Wayne recalled me to the moment. His hands were groping blindly along the table. One of them struck the brandy bottle. "Ah!" he cried, lay hold on it, and worried at the cork with savage teeth. It stuck fast. At one blow he shattered the neck, and pressed his lips to it, swallowing the fiery liquid in great gulps. Blood welled from the corner of his mouth, ran in a quick stream down his chin, and spattered upon the table. Through it he gasped—

"You heard it, Sid. You heard it!"

"Yes."

"What was it? What does it mean?"

"Jackson."

"No living Jackson ever sent that. It's the dead Jackson, begging for rest." His face was absolutely ghastly.

"Jackson can't be dead," I insisted. "I'd swear in court to that wire."

"I'm going to find out anyhow."

Wayne's voice was growing steadier

under the stimulus of the brandy.

He seized the button again.

"Mo; Mo; Mo," he

clicked furiously, giving the

personal call for Mowbray.

Instantly it was acknow-

ledged.

"Did you send that?"

queried Wayne.

"What? No; I sent

nothing," came the quick

answer, in the unmistakable

expert Morse, with the weight

of ineffable weariness on the

touch. "Your call woke me

up."

"Who called, then?"

"Where's Jackson?"

"Buried. Wait. Let me

think. How did I get here

at the key? I can't re-

member coming here. Your

call roused me, and I found

myself at the table in the

pitch dark. And I went

to bed after burying Jack-

son. My feet are all numb;

frozen, I believe. Don't

answer for a minute! I want

to think."

After a brief pause he

resumed.

"No; I can't make it out.

I'm here in the big room, and

it's very dark. But I don't

think I'm alone."

Wayne's hand jerked on

the key, but he caught him-

self and replied:

"There's something I've

got to tell you, Mowbray.

Can you stand it?"

"Go on," came the steady

reply. "I've reached the limits

of horror, I guess."

"When I called you just

now it was because Jackson

had wired us."

"Then he has come back

again. I expected this, but

not so soon. Wait till I make

a light."

Of all the agonising sus-

penses we had suffered, this

was the worst. But it was

brief.

"Jackson has come back,"

telegraphed Mowbray. "All

the time we were talking he

was sitting there, elbows on

table, chin in fists, staring at

me. It was he that wired you. He's dead, but he

wired you. He's been after me; now he's after you."

Uttering a choked cry Wayne thrust his chair

violently back, and stiffened like a man stricken, with

hands outstretched and splay-fingered, warding an

imminent prodigy.

"Can't you see him!" he cried. "Can't you see

the dead man at the key! He's calling me. Calling—

calling—calling!" He'll never stop till I go to him.

Hold me back!" His voice burst through the bound-

aries of manhood and soared into a shriek of uttermost

terror. "Don't let him call me, Sid! Don't let—"

He rose jerkily. Suddenly the light died from his eyes,

he clutched at the table and went down in the limp

surrender of a man shot through the heart. When

Michaels, aroused by that ringing shriek, came running

in, followed by the others, I had collapsed in working

over Wayne.

With me they had little difficulty. But my com-

panion, who had thus far held up the better of the

two, went under far worse when the break came. He

seemed dazed; now muttered brokenly, and again

called out lamentably against a vision that beset his

brain. Before my eyes, too, that vision had arisen;

a trim, bleak room with a dead man at a telegraph

(Continued on page 40)



"Can't you see him!" he cried. "Can't you see the dead man at the key!"

to me that some effluence, chill and malign, sped through my veins from the touch of the key. Straight on my answer the call clicked again. From above me came a gasping sob. I whirled in dismay to look into Wayne's face; but he had instant control of himself, and said, steadily—

"All right, Sid; I'll take charge now."

"M-Q; M-Q; M-Q." sounded the patient, stammering signal, as Wayne seated himself.

With a sure hand he returned the acknowledgment of the call. His face was set, now, and his eyes stared unwinkingly upon the clean-cut little piece of mechanism that had already been the messenger of so much horror. But as he leaned forward over the table it was with a shivering whisper, "Help me stick it out, oh Lord!"

"M-Q; M-Q; M-Q." clacked the metal again, and there followed that strange, convulsive birring which had so startled us before.

I started to speak, but Wayne checked me with a whisper like the siffle of the snow along the windows. "Sh-h-h-h! Here it comes."

Then I heard the message that shall ring in my brain till I die, staggering into fearful meaning from the wire, as slow words are gasped out in man's final

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key, sending out his awful plea into the night for the peace that all the sons of Earth demand of her at the last. How it might have fared with Wayne I dread to think, had not Doc Whiting come in from Deluray shortly after daybreak and taken charge of him. No sooner had the patient come to himself than he broke away from the Doc, ran over to the wood-box, seized the hatchet, and chopped the telegraph-wire in three places before I could make a move. To my reproaches he said, simply—

"Sid, if Jackson wired again I honestly believe I'd lie right here." And, looking into his haunted eyes, I believed it too.

It fell to me to recount the whole matter to Doc Whiting, while the others got Wayne to bed. As I talked I could see that Doc had some clue, or thought he had. He was very particular about the time of the messages from Forsaken Mountain; but when I came to Jackson's last call he looked at me hard.

"Davis, don't you fool yourself about one thing," he said. "Jackson's dead."

"Dead or alive, he wired us not five hours ago."

"It was never Jackson."

"Do you think you could fool me on Jackson's wire-talk?" I cried. "And Wayne, too? No, Sir! We know his hand on the key, as you know your bay mare's whinny. It was Jackson, and if Jackson is dead, it was Jackson just the same."

"Davis, you ain't well," said Doc sharply. "You go inside, and I'll give you something to make you sleep."

"No, I thank you," I told him. "No closed eyes for mine. This room is good enough for me to see."

Nor could the Doc keep Wayne in bed. He too kept seeing that other room whenever he shut his eyes. What he needed was to be with the crowd. Noon found us all, a silent company, gathered round the table to which the now useless instrument was fastened, and as we sat there, the sun, suddenly bursting through the clouds, flooded the place with the signal for the start.

In half an hour the little party of six were on their skis. For hours we travelled over the intolerable jewellery of the sunlit snow-fields, to which succeeded the lurid and ghastly splendour of the moon's radiance. Presently the shack on Forsaken Mountain stood forth sharply to our view, and close under it, minified by the distance to pigmy aspect, a human figure moved and toiled against the endless, spotless spread of the snow. Involuntarily we stopped and gazed.

"Only one," said Wayne, low and to himself, and by that I knew that he still cherished a hope long foregone by me, the hope of finding Jackson alive.

"Come on, boys!" exhorted Harting. "It's a good five miles yet," and the weary little file pressed forward.

Half-an-hour later we had a closer look—a momentary glimpse of the figure. It was stooping and rising with a regular motion.

"He's digging it up again," said Doc Whiting, under his breath; and Michaels, wincing, said, "Don't, Doc."

Our last stop for breath was under the shoulder of a hill which shut off the sight of the shack, though we could plainly hear the deep breathing of the lone toiler. Harting spoke in a whisper.

"Boys, here's where Whiting takes the reins. It's up to you, Doc."

We followed Whiting into the open, and stood waiting. But I do not think the digger even knew we were there. Straightening up his back he dropped his shovel and half turned. May God preserve me from ever seeing again such a face on a human being! It was Mowbray, but there was some vital alteration of the man, something deeper than the lines of agony and despair and horror in his face; something that loosened the joints of my knees. Back of me I heard a quick breath-catch. There was a touch on my shoulder. It was Michaels pressing close, like a lonely and frightened dog.

"Oo-oo-oo!" he whispered in the cadence of his lost childhood. "He's lookin' at us, but he don't see us."

Mowbray took an audibly deep breath, straddled the shallow excavation he had made, stooped over, and rose with the half-doubled body of a blonde and bearded giant in his arm. Heaving it up to his shoulder he staggered toward the shack. Wayne stopped forward.

"Stand still!" said Doc imperatively. Wayne stopped short.

"Crazy," whimpered Michaels. "Dead, clean, mad looney!"

A groan rose from the huddled group. Mowbray had gone to his knees, toppling Jackson's body into the snow. Instantly he was up, clasped the gruesome burden to him with its legs and arms sprawling horribly outward, and so carried it, in a rush, into the shack.

"Now!" cried Doc. "Quietly, boys. Don't go in till I lead."

We could see, by the moon's radiance poured in through the end windows, Mowbray arranging Jackson at the big table. Then, he took his own seat opposite. The picture that the wire had burned into my consciousness was complete.

"Insanity or delirium?" I whispered to Doc.

"Neither," he retorted. "There are things that science doesn't know—or name." Then he began muttering something in which I caught technical words and phrases such as "sommambulism," "autohypnosis," and "substitution of personality."

Meantime the pair inside sat staring at each other, the living and the dead. And the soul of the dead passed into the living, for slowly Mowbray's hand went forth to the key, moving into a stretch of clear moonlight, and I saw with an incredible thrill that the motion terminated, not in the expert's light, assured grip of the button, but in the awkward clutch of the tyro. The sounder fluttered very faintly, and with a sinister

familiarity. A little louder it flickered; then came the halting, stuttering call, "M-Q; M-Q; M-Q."

And so surely as the Power above gave to Mowbray and Jackson two separate souls, and two different bodies, and two distinct habits of mind and hand, it was Jackson who was wiring with the hand of Mowbray.

"What's the message?" demanded Doc.

"Jackson calling for us," I replied, without pausing to consider.

"Jackson!" he cried. He peered into my face. "Jackson! Yes; I begin to see. Master of Wonders, how it works out!"

"M-Q; M-Q; M-Q," quavered the ticker, and broke into Jackson's dreadful appeal—

"For—God's—pity—let—me—rest. For—God's—dear—love—let—me—lie—quiet. In—the—name—of—the—pitying—Father—bring—me—peace—and—unbroken—sleep."

Followed a moment's pause. The hand on the key was shaken by a spasm, and the sounder burred in shrill agony.

"Come quietly," said Doc Whiting. He opened the door and passed in, the rest of us close behind him. He walked straight to Mowbray, whose mesmerised eyes were fixed upon the dead eyes opposite. "Jackson," he said to Mowbray, laying a gentle hand on his shoulder.

"Yes," was the instant response. "Who is it? What is it?"

At the sound Wayne and I leaped back. For the voice that came from Mowbray's lips was no voice of Mowbray's. Never, in sickness or in health, in madness or in sanity, had Mowbray spoken thus. Don't ask me whose voice it was. I never had speech of Jackson; no man in that room, save Mowbray, had ever seen him in the life.

"Rest—rest—rest," went on the strange tones. "For the pity of Heaven, give me rest. I've begged them over the wire, but they wouldn't come. I must wire again—again—again."

Out groped the hand, and began once more that wild and suppliant cry for peace. Jim Harting, murderer and outlaw, turned a drawn and tear-stained face to Doc.

"Oh, I can't bear it," he groaned. "For the pity of Heaven"—I think he repeated the phrase unconsciously—"help him or kill him, Doc."

Doc drew a vial from his pocket and held it under Mowbray's nostrils. The light died out of the frenzied eyes, the lids fell.

"Get Jackson's body out and bury it," ordered Doc. "I'll stay here."

It was a hasty burial; but it was complete. When it was over we stood around the grave, and I did what I could in the way of a prayer. A shout from within cut me short. We found Doc struggling on the floor, with his man down. Delirium had set in, and the room rang with hideous ravings; now curses that made the most hardened of us shudder; now

(Continued on page 42.)

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heart-wringing pleas for rest—and all in that dreadful, unknown voice. In a lull of exhaustion Doc spoke.

"He's wearing himself out fast. Flesh and blood can't stand it. Unless we can recall him to himself—"
His face of frowning gloom supplied the conclusion.

Wayne, who had wandered to the table, aimlessly fumbled with a blank sheet of paper lying there. It fluttered over, and on the reverse side appeared a scrawl of wide-spread letters. An exclamation broke from Wayne. Straightening up quickly, he caught the telegraph-key. Mowbray had now begun to mutter and rock his head from side to side. The gloom on Doc Whiting's face deepened.

"Mo; Mo; Mo," clicked Wayne's telegraph.

The rocking head poised and was still.

"Mo; Mo; Mo."

The pallid face swiftly and wondrously changed before our eyes. Wasted and worn as it still was, it was now the face of the man we knew, not of the terrible changeling that had dragged the dead body from its grave only to do its bidding.

"Stand away, all of you," commanded Doc in sudden, fierce excitement. "Wayne's got him!"

And Wayne, wiring from the scrawled paper he had found, sent its message down to Mowbray in the uttermost depths—



Mowbray straddled the shallow excavation he had made, and rose with the half-doubled body.

"Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day. . . . For he shall give his angels charge over thee

gently. "Good-night, boys." Doc Whiting, speechless and blinded, tip-toed around the sleeping figure and wrung Wayne's hand.

[THE END.]

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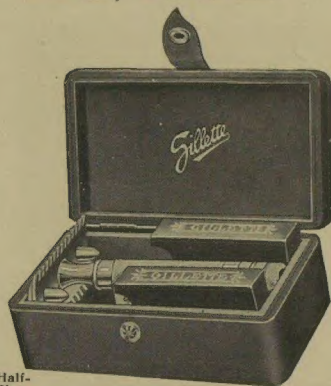
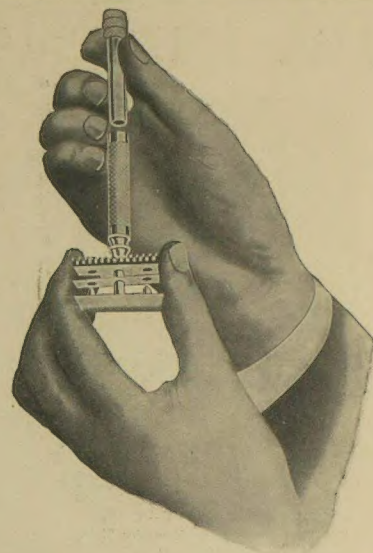
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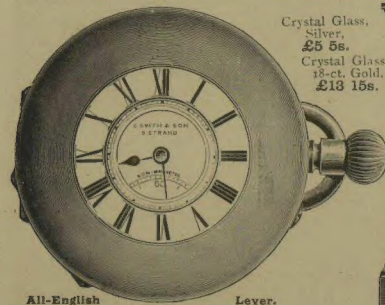


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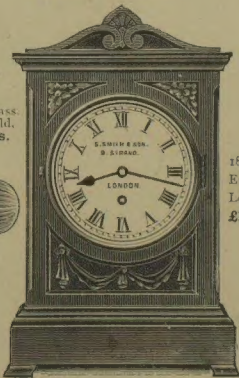
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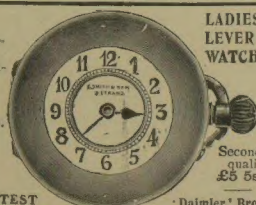


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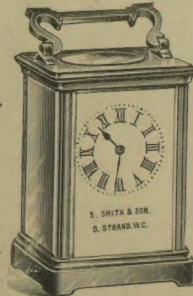
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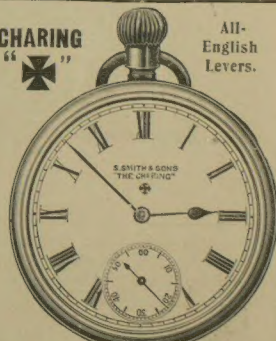
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